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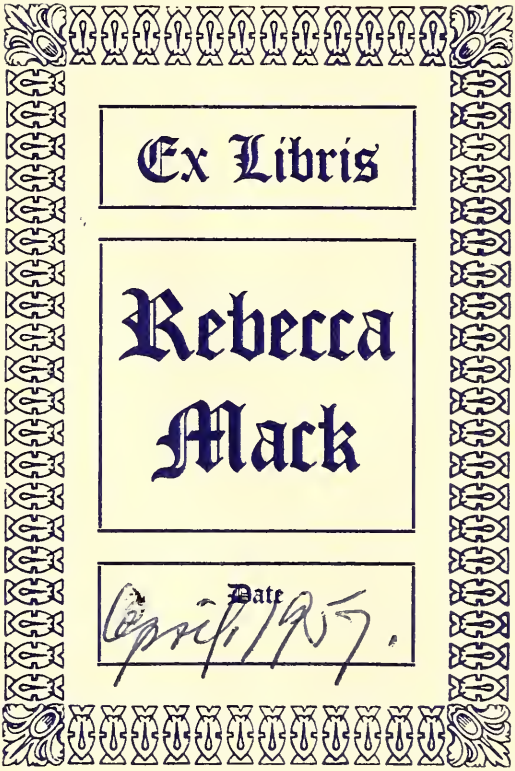

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WHEN THEY WERE GIRLS

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With 29 illustrations.

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From a drawing by her sister Pop

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WHEN THEY WERE GIRLS

Girlhood Stories of Fourteen Famous Women

by

PATRICK PRINGLE

AUTHOR OF
"THE PRISONERS' FRIEND" "LION OF AFRICA"
ETC.

With fifteen plates in half-tone

ROY PUBLISHERS: NEW YORK

TO

THE GIRLS OF TO-DAY

SOME OF WHOM WILL ALSO BECOME

FAMOUS WOMEN

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PREFACE

THIS book is about the girlhoods of fourteen famous women. They were all born before the twentieth century, and therefore they were born into a world more or less dominated by men. Because they were girls they had few opportunities. Several of them created new opportunities not only for themselves but for their sex. Directly or indirectly most of them played some part in the movement that became known as "women's rights."

When I selected the characters I deliberately sought contrasts rather than points of similarity, so any common factors that may emerge were not planted. It seems to me that these girls, although dissimilar in many ways, all had what Elizabeth Fry neatly called "the spirit of contradiction." Most of them were exceptionally curious, quicker to doubt than to believe, and more or less disobedient and rebellious. That is not surprising, as most of the advances in the history of mankind have been the result of curiosity, doubt, disobedience, and rebellion.

For the most part they were what unintelligent parents call 'difficult' children; meaning that they had wills and ideas of their own. Not all their parents thought of them in this way, for not all their parents were unintelligent. It seems that the spirit of contradiction caused most trouble in homes where meekness and respect for authority were most highly esteemed. If there is a moral in this it is not for children but for their parents.

It was fashionable once to tell children not what was true but what was thought proper for them to know; and even stories of the childhood of famous men and women were contaminated by this point of view. In this book I have tried

to play fair with the reader, and I have told the plain truth—without additions, subtractions, or glosses—as far as I could discover it. No biography tells the whole truth, and even original sources are not always reliable; but I have taken nothing on trust and checked all I could, and I have not consciously repeated a fiction or suppressed a fact.

I did not invent the conversations in this book. Everything that appears between double inverted commas was actually said or written in those words.

P.P.

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1

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU was bound to be famous, or at least notorious. She was the daughter of a duke and eloped with only a nightgown and petticoat. (Her husband was the grandson of an earl and became an ambassador, so she was forgiven.) Her daughter followed her example rather than her advice by running away with a future Prime Minister; he was already an earl himself, and she was forgiven too. Lady Mary's son became a Mohammedan and had at least four wives, white and black, and he was never forgiven. Both her sisters married earls, and one of them went mad.

All these exciting events and circumstances made some kind of contemporary fame inevitable. Yet even in her lifetime Lady Mary's fame did not depend on accidents of birth or matrimonial adventures, or even on her dressing up as a Turk. She was renowned mainly for her beauty and wit.

Her fame has survived for different reasons. One is that she introduced inoculation against smallpox into England in spite of fierce opposition by the doctors and the Church. The other is that she has become acknowledged as a Woman of Letters; literally of letters, for of all her writings it is her private correspondence that has won the greatest praise. She expected and intended that it should.

She wrote some essays as well, and a few poems: two of these are in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. She also wrote a history of her own times, but destroyed it as fast as she wrote it. She published nothing herself, for she was a lady of quality; and in that age for a person of her class and sex to expose her writings to the public gaze would have been improper, almost indecent. But she hoped that what

she considered her best work would be published after her death, and she was especially anxious about her letters.

Horace Walpole, himself a clever letter-writer, who spread much scandal about Lady Mary, said that in wit and style her letters were superior to any he had ever read except those of Madame de Sévigné. Lady Mary thought they were better than this. "The last pleasures that fell in my way was Madame Sévigné's letters," she wrote once to her sister Frances. "Very pretty they are, but I assert, without the least vanity, that mine will be full as entertaining forty years hence. I advise you, therefore, to put none of them to the use of waste paper." But she had more to fear than her sister's negligence. Her letters were often indiscreet and sometimes scandalous; and she knew that some members of her family would make great efforts to stop them from being published. "All my works are consecrated to the fire," she wrote to a friend. However, enough escaped from burning to secure her place in English literature.

Besides writing innumerable letters Lady Mary kept a diary, and she carried the ever-growing manuscript about with her until her death. Then it fell into the hands of her daughter, Lady Bute, who eventually destroyed it. Lord Bute was Prime Minister when his mother-in-law died, and he tried to prevent the publication of her letters. He bought two manuscript copies of some of them with this end in view; but Lady Mary had been too smart for him, for she had made three. The third copy was published within a year of her death.

Most historians are men, and that may be why the name of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is largely confined to histories of literature and medicine. For women her importance is much greater; for she was one of the forerunners of the movement in favour of what came to be called 'women's rights.'

In Europe until the seventeenth century the inferiority of women was generally taken for granted by both sexes. The idea of equality was not only unnatural but blasphemous. Lady Mary herself expressed the common view in one of her

early letters, in which she pleaded, rather daringly, for better education for girls. "I do not doubt," she added, "God and nature have thrown us into an inferior rank. We are a lower part of the creation, we owe obedience and submission to the superior sex, and any woman who suffers her vanity and folly to deny this rebels against the law of the Creator and indisputable order of nature." She was only twenty-one then, and writing to a bishop; and later she expressed a very different opinion: "Nature has not placed us in an inferior rank to men, no more than the female of other animals, where we see no distinction of capacity." But that was in a private letter to her daughter, and it was a shocking thing to say.

The first seeds of female revolt were sown in the seventeenth century in France, where the social status of women continued to rise until the Revolution. Then the centre of the movement for raising the position of women shifted to England. The transition was marked, in 1792, by the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Later still the leadership passed to the United States of America.

Lady Mary was born in 1689, and from an Englishwoman's point of view she lived at a peculiarly bad time. In Elizabethan and even Restoration days intelligence and knowledge in a woman had been regarded as social assets; but by the end of the seventeenth century, perhaps as a reaction against the developments in France, Englishmen had come down heavily against them. A pretty face and an empty head, with a proper subservience to men, were the standard requirements for a society lady. Education was discouraged, as it has always been among subject peoples; with good reason, for it is always subversive to subjection.

Lady Mary was born in Covent Garden, then a fashionable part of London, and baptized on May 26, 1689, at the parish church of St Paul's. She began life as plain Miss Mary. Her father, Evelyn Pierrepont, was the son of the Earl of Kingston, but only the third son; so he did not even have a courtesy title, and his chances of succeeding to the earldom

—and the family fortune—were remote. His wife, Lady Mary Pierrepont, was also the child of an earl, the Earl of Denbigh; so on both sides Mary was of aristocratic birth.

For the benefit of American readers I had better explain that the title of 'Lady' followed by a Christian name is not acquired by marriage but simply indicates that the holder of it is the daughter of a duke, marquis, or earl. Similarly, the title of 'Lord' followed by a Christian name means that the holder is the younger son of a duke or marquis; but, rather oddly, not of an earl. That is why Mary's mother was born Lady Mary Feilding, and became Lady Mary Pierrepont on her marriage, while her husband was simply Evelyn Pierrepont, Esq.

Mary was their first child, and about the time of her birth her father became a Member of Parliament. He did not remain a commoner for long, for both his elder brothers died without leaving sons. He succeeded to the earldom in 1690, becoming rich as well as noble; and so at the age of one his daughter became Lady Mary Pierrepont.

During the next few years two more girls were born, Evelyn and Frances; and, at last, a son and heir, William.

Very little is known of Mary's early life. It seems that she spent much of it at her grandmother's manor house at West Dean, in Wiltshire. Her grandmother died when she was eight, and her father inherited the estates. Mary's mother probably died about the same time. She herself was taken to the family-seat at Thoresby, in Nottinghamshire, and put in the care of a governess who had been her mother's nurse. Mary said afterwards that it was only later that she realized what the loss of her mother meant.

The children did not see much of their father, who had a town house in Arlington Street and a villa at Acton. A gentleman of leisure, he was free to pursue his own pleasures, which did not lie at home. He did not marry again until seventeen years after his wife's death, but in the meantime he had some more children. This was not unusual behaviour

for an aristocrat in those days, when discretion was considered more gentlemanly than virtue. Nor was there anything exceptional in the fact that he expected the conduct of his lawful children to be beyond reproach.

He does not seem to have been deliberately unkind to them, and probably he was never cruel to his dogs either: he did not distinguish greatly between the two. According to Mary, he was too complete a man of fashion to be tender or considerate; and, like many other men of fashion, he treated them as chattels. He demanded blind obedience: his wishes were sacred, and merely annoying him was a great crime. Even Mary, for all her courage and independence of thought, was terrified of him. Naturally she did not love him; for no parent can gain a child's love as well as fear, even if he calls fear 'respect.' His daughters' feelings for him can be seen from the letter Mary wrote to her sister Frances to report his death. After a few conventional clichés of grief she added frankly, "though, *au bout du compte*, I don't know why filial piety should exceed fatherly fondness!"

As a prominent member of the Whig Party, Lady Mary's father belonged to the famous Kit-Cat Club, a fashionable resort of noblemen, gentlemen, and Whig politicians as well as of wits and men of letters. One day the members met to choose the toasts for the year. The names of several young ladies of society were put forward when the Earl of Kingston suddenly suggested that his daughter should be included, as she was far prettier than any lady on the list so far. Mary was then about eight, and the other members assumed he was joking. Probably he was; and when it was pointed out that the rules of the club did not allow a lady to be elected until all the members had seen her he carried the joke a step farther. "You shall see her!" he promised—and at once sent a servant to fetch her from his Arlington Street house.

Mary was dressed in her best clothes and taken to the club. Her health was drunk, and she was loudly acclaimed. She was elected unanimously, and her name was engraved on a drinking-glass. Her father carried the joke still

further by promising to have her portrait painted and hung in the club-room so that she could be enrolled as a regular toast.

It was not a joke to Mary, who was perhaps the only completely sober person in the room. This story was told later by her youngest granddaughter, Louisa, who said that Mary was given sweetmeats and caresses and "what perhaps pleased her better than either, heard her wit and beauty loudly extolled on every side. Pleasure, she said, was too poor a word to express her sensations; they amounted to ecstasy. Never again, throughout her whole future life, did she pass so happy a day." Louisa was not always accurate in her stories of her grandmother, but there is a ring of truth here. Mary always loved flattery, and never tired of hearing praises of her beauty and wit.

In her childhood Mary probably was not often taken to London, but spent most of her time at Thoresby. She and her sisters and brother grew up there, in the heart of the Robin Hood country; but they might as well have been in the middle of a desert for all they cared. Romantic love of the country was not fashionable in that age, and Mary hated it. Her letters from Thoresby say nothing of the forest scenery: her only comments on her surroundings were about the bad state of the roads. Although she was unconventional, even eccentric, her heart was always in the social life of the town. She was blind to the beauties of nature, and never concealed her contempt for the pastoral poets. In a poem of her own she defined the country as a place where one found:

> The swains greater brutes than their flocks,
> And the nymphs as polite as the swains.

Mary envied her brother, who had a tutor and would go to Cambridge. While he was being educated she and her sisters were taught embroidery, deportment and etiquette, singing and playing a musical instrument—in their case the guitar. At one time Mary had a drawing-master, but her eyes were

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU IN TURKISH DRESS

After J. Thurston

FANNY BURNEY

From a painting by her cousin Edward Burney

affected, and her father stopped the lessons. Apart from that her only teacher was her "good homespun governess," who, she said afterwards, "took so much pains from my infancy to fill my head with superstitious tales and false notions, it was none of her fault I am not at this day afraid of witches and hobgoblins or turned methodist"; as a faithful member of the Church of England, she was not sure which would have been worse.

Yet Mary did not grow up uneducated. She educated herself—in her father's library. He was no scholar himself, but he was a gentleman of fashion, and it was fashionable to have a well-stocked library. Mary spent most of her time in the library. She read translations of popular French romantic novels, English poetry, and translations from the classics. She also tried her hand at writing—first romances, and then, at twelve, an imitation of Ovid. She was, as she said herself, "a rake of reading." When she had run through the English books she turned to the Latin, and wanted to read them too; for in that age no man could call himself educated unless he could read Latin.

Mary complained later that she had the worst education in the world, but this was hardly true. She had access to a great number of books of all kinds, and the leisure to read them. If no one encouraged her, at least no obstacles were put in her way. She was given the free run of the library, and read some books that most girls are not allowed to read to-day. They do not seem to have done her any harm.

While she could choose her own books she had her friends chosen for her, and most of these belonged to her own class. They included Dolly Walpole, Sir Robert's sister, and Lady Anne Vaughan, and the daughters of Lord Carlisle. Mary had little in common with them, and preferred the company of Mrs Hewet, the wife of the Surveyor-General of Her Majesty's Woods and Forests. She also was a great reader, especially of romantic novels.

Besides reading and writing, there was little to do at Thoresby except visit neighbours or go to the Nottingham

races. The large house only came to life when the Earl came for a visit and held big dinner-parties. When Mary was old enough she had to preside at table and carve for all the guests. To be able to do this she had to take lessons three times a week from a carving-master. A dinner contained many courses, and carving was a full-time job. In order to be able to do it Mary had to eat her own dinner an hour or two before everyone else. Yet she enjoyed these parties, for the guests paid compliments to her wit and beauty, and to her learning too. This also pleased her father. None of his friends had such well-read daughters, and he was rather proud of her accomplishments. But he does not seem to have taken them very seriously, for he still gave her no help in her education.

Mary's learning became famous, but it did not win her many friends of her own sex. It gained her at least one bitter enemy. This was a girl about three years older than herself, who was rich, beautiful, and vain. She was fond of boasting of her conquests—and the latest of these, she told Mary, was a young man who lived at Wharncliffe Lodge, about thirty miles from Thoresby. His name was Edward Wortley Montagu. Perhaps Mary would like to see him?

Mary decided privately that if he had fallen in love with this vain girl he could not be worth much, but she agreed to go to a party at Wharncliffe Lodge. Edward's sisters, Anne and Katherine, were there; and, indeed, he was the only man. He did not expect much conversation from "a set of romps," as Mary put it, and it was arranged that they should play cards. Tea was served first, and Edward mentioned a new play he had seen recently. Mary had not seen it, but she had read it, and she gave her opinion of it. Her criticism was so intelligent and witty that Edward asked her about other books she had read. The rest of the company dropped out of the conversation. Mary talked about poetry, and Edward was astonished at her knowledge of classical as well as modern poets.

All this was very annoying to the girl who had arranged

the party in order to show off her conquest. Edward seemed to have forgotten her completely, and she had to call him several times before he would go to the table. And then, instead of playing cards, he continued his conversation with Mary. A good scholar himself, he had never met such a well-read and intelligent girl—and she was still only fourteen. The conquest was Mary's, and before she left the lodge Edward's sisters arranged for a further meeting.

That is Mary's account of how she met Edward; and, although some of the details are inaccurate—she said he was nearly thirty, although he could not have been more than twenty-five—it is probably true in substance. (There can be no certainty, for Mary did not always write the truth.) Her granddaughter Louisa described another meeting, which possibly took place later. Mary paid a visit to Anne Wortley Montagu, and Edward happened to be in his sister's apartment when she called. Edward and Mary began to talk about the classics, and the Latin historian Quintus Curtius was mentioned. Mary said she had never read his famous history of Alexander the Great, so after she had left Edward sent her a copy. On the fly-leaf he wrote some lines of verse praising Mary's wit and beauty. They were rather laboured, but no doubt Mary liked them. She also liked Edward, who was not only a scholar but a friend of many of the leading writers of the day, including Addison and Steele. He was also a very eligible bachelor.

Edward was a grandson of the Earl of Sandwich and the son of a Whig Member of Parliament who had made a very shrewd marriage. But Edward was a younger son, and at first his prospects were poor. No young lady of quality would have boasted of conquering him, until, shortly before his first meeting with Mary, his elder brother died and he became heir to the family fortune. About the same time he entered Parliament as a Whig, and could look forward to a good career. He was the sort of man any lady of quality could feel pleased to marry.

But Mary did not want to marry him or anyone else. In

her own words, "she had a way of thinking very different from other girls, and instead of looking on a husband as the ultimate aim of her wishes, she never thought of marriage but as a bond that was to subject her to a master, and she dreaded an engagement of that sort." This was indeed an unusual outlook. Most girls regarded marriage as an escape rather than subjection. So long as they were single they were carefully chaperoned and never allowed to do anything that might endanger their marriage prospects; and, as the dangers were many and varied, most girls were forced to play safe by doing nothing at all. They had little or no choice of husband; but marriage, if not quite a gateway to freedom, was at least an escape from a very small prison into a bigger one.

Mary did not want to live in any kind of prison. She was unusually intelligent, curious, and independent, and she disliked the idea of promising to obey anyone for the rest of her life. The trouble was that there was little alternative to marriage.

A book that greatly impressed Mary was *A Serious Proposal to Ladies*, by Mary Astell, published in 1697. The author attacked the male "puppies" who opposed female education, and her proposal was the founding of a Church of England institution that would serve as both a religious retreat and an academy of learning for ladies: in fact, as a women's university. It was said that Queen Anne put up £10,000 for the project, but it never came to anything. Mrs Astell was about two hundred years ahead of her time. Her ideas naturally appealed to Mary, who at fifteen wanted to found a nunnery and elect herself Lady Abbess. It is unlikely that this ambition lasted very long. She was far too fond of society for a conventual life—far too fond of hearing her wit and beauty praised by men.

Meanwhile her friendship with the Wortley Montagus developed. She met them in London during the winter, and afterwards wrote regularly to Edward's sisters. It would have been improper to write to Edward himself; but he read her letters, and she was delighted to learn that he said he

"had no notion that a girl of fourteen could write as good English as his friend Mr Addison."

She had already confided to Edward that she wanted to learn Latin, and he gave her encouragement. It was all he could give her, and all she could get from anyone. She taught herself, studying for five or six hours a day for two years in her father's library, when every one else thought she was reading romantic novels. Edward helped her with difficult books, but she learnt the language herself.

This does not mean that she was a solemn girl who preferred study to pleasure. Far from it. She was much fonder of social life than Edward was, and she evidently thought that one of the chief uses of education—for a woman, at least—was to enable her to shine in society. She shone very brightly indeed when she made her début, in 1709. Her father, now a marquis (he became a duke only after her marriage), showed her off to his friends and delighted in hearing her praised and in seeing her conversing almost on equal terms with Addison and Steele and Congreve when all the other young ladies remained tongue-tied. He even gave her a little help in her education by arranging for her to have Italian lessons while she was in London. She thoroughly enjoyed herself—rather too much for Edward's liking. She was so brilliant that he wanted to marry her; so brilliant that he feared to have her for his wife.

The courtship began in a strange way. They did not see a great deal of each other, and they were never alone together. They could not even correspond directly. But Mary continued to write to Anne, and there was nothing to stop Anne from showing the letters to her brother; nothing to stop him from helping her to compose her replies, either. So Mary wrote for Edward's eyes, and he drafted his sister's letters to Mary. If any of the letters fell into the wrong hands neither party was compromised, for on the surface it was an innocent correspondence between two girls. The lovers could express their feelings with exceptional freedom. "I love you dearly," wrote Anne. "I shall love you all my life," replied Mary. "I

am entirely yours, and wish nothing more than that it may be some time or other in my power to convince you that there is nobody dearer than yourself to . . ."

But Edward was not so easily convinced. Once he heard a rumour that Mary had been flirting with another man—"the most happy person now in being"—at the Nottingham races, and Anne had to write and reproach Mary for her inconstancy. The report was false, and Mary wrote back sharply. "I passed the days of the Nottingham races at Thoresby, without seeing or even wishing to see one of the sex." She denied that she had shown favour to anyone else. "I don't so much as know the man's name; I have been studying these three hours, and cannot guess what you mean."

This correspondence continued until Mary was twenty, when Anne died. There was no need for the courtship to have gone on as long as that. Mary was old enough to marry, and apparently willing; Edward was eligible, and had good reason to think her father would give his consent. All he had to do was ask for her hand. He hesitated to do this, because he feared she might not be a suitable wife for him. He had good reason for his fears.

Although he was heir to great wealth, Edward was not yet a rich man; and he was very mean. He cared little for social life, and preferred living in the country to London, mainly because it was cheaper. He was also very jealous. Therefore a suitable wife for him would have been a woman who was either very rich or who had inexpensive tastes and cared nothing for society, who would be happy to live quietly in the country, who would adore her husband and take no pleasure in the compliments and flattery of other men.

Mary had none of these qualifications. Edward was eligible enough to have won richer girls, and she was almost the exact opposite of his conception of an ideal wife. Much as he admired her beauty and wit and learning, he would hardly have considered marrying her but for one thing: he was in love with her.

He was not madly in love, though; at least, not enough to

take her at any price. While his heart told him to marry her his head advised caution, and he tried to satisfy both by persuading her to marry him on his terms. He wanted assurances that she would live up to his idea of what a wife should be. That was why he delayed proposing, and prolonged the correspondence.

When Anne died he lost his secretary and the 'cover' for his courtship. Six months later (in March 1710) he came out into the open and wrote to Mary direct. It was a strange letter for a lover, with no tenderness and many forebodings. "If we differ we must live asunder," he said; and he went on to say that he did not see how they could help but differ. He could not stand the people she tolerated, and if she married him she would have to give up those of her friends whom he disliked. Even then they were unlikely to be happy together. "I dare own to you that I think you can never suit with one like myself." She would be "the most importunate woman on earth" if she refused a richer offer in order to marry "one with whom you have so small a chance of being easy."

It was difficult for Mary to reply to this letter. For a young lady to write to a man at all was dangerous and reckless; and answering this unchivalrous letter was against pride as well as caution. Yet Mary replied, and it was not because she was in love with Edward. However much she liked romantic novels, she never let passion influence her life. As she once told Edward in a moment of extreme candour, "I can esteem, I can be a friend, but I don't know whether I can love. Expect all that is complaisant and easy, but never what is fond, in me." Nor, as we have seen, did the idea of marriage appeal to her as it did to other girls. But the alternative was even less attractive, and of the men of her class she had met, Edward appealed to her most. He appreciated her for her learning as well as her wit and beauty, he was well read himself, and she could talk to him about Virgil and Ovid. The number of prospective husbands was small; she was unlikely to do much better, and if she did nothing about it herself she was in danger of doing much worse. If another

suitor came along and won her father's approval she would be expected to approve too.

So she replied to Edward's ungracious letter, but it was a spirited reply. "I have so much esteem for you I should be sorry to hear you was unhappy; but for the world I would not be the instrument of making you so, which (of the humour you are) is hardly to be avoided if I am your wife." She did not think he loved her as much as he pretended. "I am sure was I in love I could not talk as you do." Yet she evidently still hoped, for she denied that she had expensive tastes and said she would not mind living simply and would be as happy on £2000 a year as on £20,000. But she was not prepared to give up her friends, and it took good will from both sides to make a successful marriage. "Give me leave to say it, (I know it sounds vain,) I know how to make a man of sense happy; but then that man must resolve to contribute something towards it himself." She ended by saying that this was the first letter she had "ever writ to one of your sex, and shall be the last. You must never expect another. I resolve against all correspondence of the kind; my resolutions are seldom made, and never broke." In other words, he must either abandon his suit or speak to her father.

Edward did neither. He continued to write, and in spite of her resolution Mary continued to reply. She was in her father's house at Acton now, and Edward had little chance of seeing her. But he sent her a message through an orange-woman, who, with an eye to a tip, gave him a bogus message from Mary asking him to send a letter through the same channel. Edward did so, and the orange-woman brought him back a reply which was so generous that he thought he was winning his case. This reply was not in Mary's handwriting, so he assumed that for safety's sake she had dictated it to a servant. He wrote a warm letter of thanks, thoughtfully warning Mary against using orange-women as messengers, and sent his own servant to deliver it.

The servant went to the villa, knocked on the door, and asked for Lady Mary, and handed over the letter so openly

that she was both angry and alarmed. The incident was seen by her governess, who filched the letter while Mary was asleep and sent it to her father. The marquis was furious with Mary, calling her an abandoned woman; and Mary was furious with Edward. She told him so in a letter which she sent through her maid. She also pointed out that her character was now compromised, and he had better propose or go away.

Still Edward did neither. He apologized for the incident, adding with a rare flash of wit, that he was sorry to learn her previous letter was forged as it was "more favourable than any of the rest." He still refused to propose until he was sure they were suited to each other, but he chivalrously offered to make a formal request to her father simply to clear her character: he could make sure it would be refused, he said, by pretending that his estate was worth much less than it was. She did not like this idea at all, and again told him to make up his mind. She was now suffering from measles, and when she recovered her father packed her off to West Dean.

She hated Wiltshire more than Thoresby, and was soon writing to Mrs Hewet complaining that the men did nothing but hunt and drink and that she found most of her neighbours unbearable. She passed the time by translating a work of the Latin philosopher Epictetus, and sent it to her friend Dr Burnet, the Bishop of Salisbury, asking him if she had done it right. She took the opportunity to give the Bishop a lecture on women's education. "My sex is usually forbid studies of this nature, and folly is reckoned so much our proper sphere we are sooner pardoned any excess of that than the least pretensions to reading or good sense.... Our natural defects are every way indulged, and it is looked upon as in a degree criminal to improve our reason or fancy we have any. We are taught to place all our art in adorning our outward forms, and permitted, without reproach, to carry that custom even to extravagancy, while our minds are entirely neglected.... There is hardly a character in the world more despicable, or more liable to universal ridicule,

than that of a learned woman; these words imply, according to the received sense, a talking, impertinent, vain, and conceited creature."

After saying that she was not arguing for equality between the sexes Mary said she thought "the careless education given to women of quality" often led to their ruin, "it being so easy for any man of sense that finds it either his interest or his pleasure to corrupt them." She thought that virtue was endangered rather than protected by ignorance: a startling view then, and one that is by no means generally accepted to-day.

Meanwhile Edward at last made up his mind. Mary had told him she would bring him more than her wit and beauty: her brother was to be married off to a rich heiress, and from the proceeds her father had decided to settle £10,000 on her. She had, of course, no idea of the terms he would demand from her prospective husband. "People in my way are sold like slaves; and I cannot tell what price my master will put on me." Edward did not expect that the price would be too high.

He soon discovered his mistake. After overcoming all his misgivings about Mary's suitability as a wife, and making a formal proposal to her father, he was told he could only marry her if he agreed to settle his estate on their future eldest son. Edward calculated that this would cost him more than Mary's marriage portion, and refused the demand. The marquis stuck to his terms. Negotiations were suspended and eventually broken off. That would have been the end of it if Edward had not been in love.

He was very frank with Mary. If, he said, he was sure she really loved him he would accept her father's terms, unreasonable as they were, and marry her for love alone; but he had to be sure of her love.

Mary was equally candid. She esteemed him greatly, and was willing to marry him; but romantic passion was not her line. He ought to admit she was candid.

Edward admitted it, and, as his health was bad, he went abroad. He also showed signs of cooling off; and Mary

warmed up. Letters were delayed in reaching him, and she wrote six times without getting a reply. Worried that he might be ill or no longer cared for her, she begged him to write. Yet she still did not give him the declaration of love that he wanted.

Edward got the letters when he came back to England, and the correspondence was resumed. It went on for another two years. Many of the letters have survived, and they are surely among the queerest love-letters that were ever written. Mary and Edward were virtually carrying on a paper war.

The same arguments were gone into over and over again. Edward wanted to know if Mary would be willing to give up the pleasures of society, and especially of being flattered by men he could not stand; if she would live quietly, and not hanker after the world of fashion; above all, if she really loved him.

Mary replied that she was prepared to live modestly in London, but did not want to be buried in the country. She would be a sincere and faithful wife, but she was not prepared to throw over all her friends. She would love Edward as much as she could, but "if you expect passion, I am utterly unacquainted with any.... Flights of passion I neither know how to feel or counterfeit." Again she asked him to give her credit for her candour. Then, carrying the war into the enemy's camp, she asked what reason she had to think he really loved her.

From his letters she had little reason at all; for when Edward wrote of his own feelings he never used the word 'love.' He expressed his esteem and respect, and told Mary how much he valued and admired her; but he could not bring himself to write down that he loved her. The fact that he still sought such an unprofitable marriage seems proof that he did; and the rough drafts of his letters, so heavily corrected that many of them are hardly legible, show how much effort they took to compose. Stilted and laboured as they were, they were still love-letters, if perhaps the letters of a man in love against his will.

Mary's letters were more fluent and much more witty and entertaining; and that also annoyed Edward. "I beg you will this once try to avoid being witty, and to write in a style of business, tho' it should appear to you as flat as mine." He did not think she could be so witty if she really loved him, and probably he was right.

But the uncertainty and fear of discovery told on her, and several times she tried to make up his mind for him. More than once she said good-bye for ever, and swore she would not write again. "If you write, be not displeased if I send it back unopened." She never carried out her threats, and they were always ineffectual; and the wrangling went on and on. Eventually Edward asked for a private meeting, and more than one was held in the house of his friend Steele. These meetings were terribly dangerous for Mary, and they served no purpose. The battle of words continued as if the meetings had not taken place.

It looked as if the argument could go on for ever, but early in 1712—when Mary was in her twenty-third year—it was abruptly interrupted. A rich gentleman with estates in Ireland, known to us only as Mr K., asked the marquis for his eldest daughter's hand. The marquis approved, for Mr K. had no objection to the entailment of his estate.

Mary was terrified. She was not passionately in love with Edward, and he had some tiresome faults; but life with him, even on a desert island, would be paradise compared with being married to Mr K. She loathed the man. She did not dare tell her father this, but wrote him a letter in which she said she could not marry Mr K. She also offered not to marry at all. The marquis sent for her and gave her a stormy half-hour. "He was very much surprised that I did not depend on his judgment for my future happiness; that he knew nothing I had to complain of, etc.; that he did not doubt I had some other fancy in my head, which encouraged me to this disobedience; . . . but he assured me, whatever proposals were made him, he would never so much enter into a treaty with any other." He also told her that if she refused to marry

Mr K. he would leave her nothing in his will but an annuity of £400. Then, shrewdly, he told her to seek the opinions of her relatives.

It seems strange that Mary was surprised by what her relatives said. "I objected I did not love him. They made answer they found no necessity of loving; if I lived well with him that was all was required of me; and that if I considered this town I should find very few women in love with their husbands, and yet a many happy." Almost any young lady would have been told the same in the eighteenth century, and similar opinions were not uncommon a hundred years later. Marriage for love was exceptional; and although it may not always seem like it, we live to-day in an exceptionally romantic age.

Mary still would not give in, and told her father that as she really preferred a single life to marriage she would, with his permission, "take that resolution." He replied that he could not stop her, but if she was determined to flout his wishes she was never to expect any favour from him; on the contrary, "he would not fail to confine me where I might repent at leisure." She replied to this with another letter, saying that her aversion to the marriage could not be overcome but that she was in her father's hands and "he might dispose of me as he thought fit." The marquis interpreted this as a surrender, and "proceeded as if I had given a willing consent." She was too frightened to tell him that was not what she meant at all.

Mary told Edward the whole story in a letter dated July 4. She added that her father suspected she still hoped to marry Edward, and had told her to get the idea out of her mind as he had "no inclination to see his grandchildren beggars."

Edward took the news casually and, judging by his reply, a bit callously. He was not surprised by her father's attitude to him, and he had already come to the conclusion that he might lose less financially by marrying her without consent than on the marquis's terms. After some more fencing he said he was ready to do this if she really loved him.

But an elopement was a much more serious matter for Mary than Edward. It would involve the loss of her reputation, her family, and her financial security. On the other hand her father had promised to make her life miserable if she remained single, and she knew she would be miserable if she married Mr K.; and she was becoming fonder of Edward than ever before.

Mary did not weigh up the advantages and disadvantages as coolly as this. She was terrified of her father, and her letters show that she was almost in a state of nervous collapse. To add to her troubles her father had become suspicious, and was having her closely watched; even her sister Frances had been put to spy on her. But the worst of it was that the preparations for the wedding were going ahead at full speed. She thought of Mr K., and she thought of Edward; and she told him what he had been trying to get out of her for two and a half years. "The wisest thing I can do is to do whatever you please. . . . You may manage in a manner to make me passionately fond of you. . . . The bias of my heart is in your favour . . . I can think with pleasure of giving you with my first declaration of love the sincerest proof of it. . . . I did not believe I was capable of thinking this way, but I find it is in your power to make me think what you please. I know if I do not venture all things to have you, I shall repent it. . . . I am willing to abandon all conversation but yours. If you please, I will never see another man. In short, I will part with everything for you, but you. . . ."

Having made up her mind, she promptly changed it; or rather she became uncertain again, and asked Edward for more time to think. At the end of July her father decided to pack her off to Acton while the wedding arrangements were concluded. Her brother William was living there, and she would have a chance to seek his advice. The day before she was to go she wrote to tell Edward of this. "I hope a day's delay of my answer can be no considerable injury to you any way. I find my inclinations are more your side than I imagined. But—I will write Saturday morning without fail.

If I resolve to be so at all, Sunday night I believe I must be yours. Forgive the irresolution of this letter. I know not what I should do."

She was not Edward's on Sunday night, for the need to make a decision was postponed. A technical flaw had been found in the marriage treaty, and the papers had to be sent back to Ireland. "This is at least a reprieve of three weeks," she wrote to Edward, "and if you please, allows us more time for consideration." Edward did not please, for he was now eager for an elopement; but Mary still hung back. She saw William and confided in him, and he gave her his sympathy but little else. He was a weak character himself, and had allowed his father to marry him off to a rich half-wit, so Mary could not have expected much more. Probably she was simply putting off the hour of decision.

Then her hand was forced again. Her father had become more suspicious, and on the Monday he ordered her to go to West Dean at the beginning of the following week. He thought she would be safer there than at Acton, and so did she. "I am not to come from thence but to give myself to all I hate," she told Edward. "I shall never see you more. These considerations fright me to death." Again her mind was made up. "Come next Sunday under this garden wall, on the road some little distance from the summer-house at ten o'clock." He could bring either a coach and six or a pair, as he thought. But he was only to come if he was sure he wanted to marry her. "Consult your heart, and let that determine you. Make no scruple about going back from your word if you cannot resolve upon it." She reserved the same right for herself, and warned him not to be surprised if he got a letter on the Sunday telling him she had changed her mind. Even if he did not their marriage was not certain. "Let us both be at liberty till the parson puts an end to it."

Edward was understandably irritated by this, and said he could hardly be blamed for wondering whether Mary really cared for him at all. Still, he said she could have him if she wanted him, and he would come with a coach and six. "If

we should once get into a coach," he added with more wit than she was capable of just then, "let us not say one word till we come before the parson, lest we should engage in fresh disputes." Then he repented of his irritation, and sent a warmer letter; and Mary sent another warm one back, although she still left herself a way out. "I have examined my own heart whether I can leave everything for you; I think I can. If I change my mind, you shall know before Sunday; after that I will not change my mind." Edward replied generously, almost lovingly, telling her of "the joy I am in for being so near the greatest happiness I am capable of enjoying," and adding that he had kissed her letter over and over again.

On Friday Mary was uncertain again. "I tremble for what we are doing. Are you sure you will love me for ever? Shall we never repent? I fear and I hope." She broke off writing as his last letter arrived; then she went on, "I will be only yours, and I will do what you please. You shall hear from me again to-morrow, not to contradict, but to give some directions. My resolution is taken. Love me and use me well."

But on Saturday her resolution wavered again. "I begin to fear again." She reminded Edward of her father's inevitable anger, which would be increased by the fact that he had already spent £400 on "wedding-cloaths." He would not forget that in a hurry, and probably he would never be reconciled to the marriage. "Reflect now for the last time in what manner you must take me," she urged Edward. "I shall come to you with only a nightgown and petticoat, and that is all you will get with me." Then she gave him some confused instructions, in which she suggested it might be better if he came on the Monday morning instead of the Sunday evening; but finally she left it to him.

Mary was about to send this letter to Edward when all their plans were destroyed. The news arrived that her father was coming to Acton the following morning. She scribbled a note to this effect and put it in with the letter to Edward.

The marquis duly arrived on the Sunday, and made it plain

that he had a good idea what had been going on; and Mary could not deny it. The marquis also made it clear that the elopement would not now take place. He was going to see that Mary went off to West Dean early the next morning, and she would stay there until she married Mr K.

There was no coach and six by the garden wall near the summer-house that night; but the next morning Mary was up at five, writing to Edward. She told him she was to leave at seven. "If you can come to the same place any time before that, I may slip out. . . . If this is impracticable, adieu, I fear for ever."

Evidently Edward could not come, for Mary left in the coach for West Dean at seven. But it was not adieu for ever, for Edward mounted his horse and followed. Mary left notes for him at inns on the road where overnight halts were made. At one stage Edward put up at the same inn, and behaved so furtively that he was suspected of being a highwayman; but she had gone to bed early, and an opportunity was missed.

Another note was left, telling Edward to get a coach. Another inn was reached, and Edward was there with the coach. Mary eluded her escort and got in, and the coach drove off; and before the marquis could do anything more about it his daughter was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

The marquis had every reason to be angry, apart from the loss of £400 for the "wedding-cloaths"; for Mary was no sooner married than she fell in love with her husband, and so proved a better judge of her future happiness than her father.

2

FANNY BURNEY

LORD MACAULAY called Fanny Burney the first English novelist of her sex. That was giving her too much credit, and yet not enough. Other Englishwomen had written novels, but she was the first of either sex to write an English novel of home-life. It was called *Evelina: or, a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*. There is little merit in the plot, which is stale, hackneyed, and banal. The originality of the novel lies in its true-to-life characters and the author's use of the ordinary incidents of everyday life. She said in her Preface that her purpose was "to draw characters from nature," and in her private diary she wrote: "I have not pretended to show the world what it actually is, but what it appears to a girl of seventeen." She was more than seventeen when she wrote *Evelina*, but it was based on her own experience.

Realism of this kind was something new in English fiction. Before then most novels had been improbable romances about improbable people. Anyone who thinks modern novels are trash should compare them with the forgotten best-sellers of the eighteenth century and learn just how trashy a novel can be. Much of the credit for the improvement is due to Fanny Burney. You can see her influence in the domestic novels of Jane Austen, and in the humorous characters of Dickens; and, for that matter, in the family affairs of Mrs Dale, the Archers, and the Groves.

Fanny's father, Charles Burney, was a musician. By all accounts he was a brilliant performer, a good teacher, an unoriginal composer, and an able historian. He was a kindly man, with a remarkable gift for making friends. "A man for all the world to love," Dr Johnson said, and insisted that "it is but natural to love him."

He was living at King's Lynn, Norfolk, when Fanny was born, on June 13, 1752. He already had a girl of three, Hetty, and a boy of two, James, both of whom had been born in London. Their father was still only twenty-six. He had left London the year before Fanny was born on account of poor health. He was now organist at St Margaret's Church, and gave music lessons to the children of the local gentry. He found the country life rather dull after London, where he had not only advanced rapidly in his profession but had made friends with many of the leading writers, artists, singers, and musicians. Most of the people he met in King's Lynn either imported wine or exported beer, and were not very interested in literature, art, or music. But his wife made two good friends. One was Dolly Young, who was very intelligent and very plain; the other was Elizabeth Allen, the widow of a wine-merchant, whose daughter Maria was born about the same time as Fanny. The Burneys had two more children in the next five years, called Susan and Charles.

Their mother was well read and intelligent, and she began the girls' education herself. At least, she began to teach Hetty, and took her through the works of Pope and an English version of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Fanny used to sit and listen, and she learnt some of Pope's poems by hearing her sister recite them aloud. That was as far as she got, though; for Fanny was a backward child.

James, who had a more serious education because he was a boy, used to amuse himself by pretending to teach Fanny to read. He used to open a book and hold it in front of her upside down—and he swore she never found out his trick. When she was eight Fanny still did not know the letters of the alphabet. Friends of the family spoke of her as "the little dunce," but her mother told them they were wrong. She said Fanny was not dull, because she was very inventive at play.

But most people were sorry for Fanny, especially when they saw her together with her elder sister. Hetty was pretty, quick-witted, and vivacious. Fanny was plain, slow-witted,

and very shy. She was short, had mouse-coloured hair, a sharp nose, and a sallow complexion, and she was extremely short-sighted. With strangers she was tongue-tied; but in the family she was cheerful enough, and she was especially good friends with Susan, another bright and pretty one like Hetty.

Eight years after Fanny's birth the family moved back to London, and took a house in Poland Street, off Oxford Street, which was then quite a fashionable residential district. Charles Burney, restored in health, soon became the most popular music-master in London. His daily round sometimes lasted from seven in the morning till eleven at night. But he resumed his old friendships with men like David Garrick and Sir Joshua Reynolds, who often called at his house.

Another child was born, Charlotte; but soon afterwards Mrs Burney died. On her deathbed she advised her husband to marry Dolly Young; but, as Fanny put it, he was "too ardent an admirer of beauty" to do without it entirely in a wife, and in any case he was too heartbroken to think of remarriage yet. He took on more work, and let the house run itself. Under Hetty, who was only twelve, it ran remarkably well. James now went to sea as a "Captain's servant," and at seven Charles was sent to Charterhouse. That left the four girls, one of them still a baby; and for the next three years they educated themselves.

Fanny was still backward, but when she was ten she learned to read and began to write. Almost at once she started to write stories, plays, and even epic poems. Whatever they were like they could hardly have been imitations, for she had still read almost nothing. Indeed, it was not until two or three years after she began writing that she showed any interest in books.

People were still sorry for her, and even her father used to speak of her as "poor Fan." Her sisters were so much prettier and brighter, and she was still so shy. Her shyness made her so solemn and grave with strangers that they nicknamed her "the old lady."

There was a wig-maker's shop next door to the Burney's

house, with a small garden at the back. The girls used to play in it with the wig-maker's daughters. One day the door of the store-room in the house was left open, and the girls raided it. They found a lot of wigs there, and put them on and danced about the garden; and one of the wigs fell into a tub of water kept for the shrubs.

The wig-maker came back and was furious. The wig was worth more than ten guineas, he said, and now it was ruined. He blamed his own daughters, and was telling them what he thought of them when "the old lady" intervened.

"What signifies talking so much about an accident?" she asked. "The wig is wet, to be sure; the wig was a good wig, to be sure; but it's no use to speak of it any more; because what's done can't be undone."

The story got back to her father, who was so amused that he wrote it down. It was a good thing he did, for without it parts of her diary and letters would be difficult for us to understand. The phrase "the wig is wet" became a family idiom, and was used generally to express the idea that something could not be helped.

In 1764 Charles Burney took Hetty and Susan to a school in Paris. Why he decided to have Susan educated instead of Fanny is something of a mystery. The reason he gave himself is that he feared Fanny might be attracted to Roman Catholicism on the Continent, but this sounds more like an excuse than a reason. It could not have been favouritism, for he had no favourites; it might have been because Fanny was backward and Susan much brighter; most probably it was because he thought "poor Fan" was too shy and would be unhappy away from home. Fanny does not seem to have complained. She stayed at home minding the baby, Charlotte, now three years old; and she went on reading and writing furiously. Sometimes she visited Chessington, in Surrey, to see the oldest friend of the family, Samuel Crisp.

Daddy Crisp, as they called him, was really like a second father to the Burney girls, and especially to Fanny. A man of taste and fashion and some artistic talent, he had written

a play which had been staged by David Garrick. After travelling abroad and losing most of his money he had settled down to retirement in the country. According to Charles Burney, he was the first owner of a "harpsichord with hammers"—a pianoforte—in England. Fanny thought he was "the dearest thing on earth," and, as he had no paternal duties, he could show his preference for his "Fannikins."

When she was nearly fifteen her sisters came back from Paris, where they had spent over two years. It had been suggested that their places should be taken by Fanny and Charlotte, but nothing came of this idea. Charlotte was still only six, and later her father sent her to a boarding-school in Norfolk. Fanny stayed at home, her younger sister Susan offering to teach her French. So she was the only one of the six children who never went to school or, indeed, had any formal education at all.

Charles Burney was afterwards criticized for this neglect, even by his friend Dr Johnson. He gave three of his daughters a better education than most girls of their class had in those days, and yet he ignored the one who had the most talent. He was not blamed at the time, for Fanny gave no sign that she had any talent at all. She still seemed the dullest, she was still shy and awkward, and it is likely that her father kept her at home because he did not want her to be hurt. It is also probable that she could not have had a better education for writing her novels. She was allowed to read what she liked and write what she liked. She could listen to the witty conversation of her father's circle of friends, and let her imagination wander without restraint. Schoolroom discipline might have taught her to recite poems and do sums, but it would not have produced *Evelina*. To a future novelist formal education often does more harm than good. The value of a work of fiction depends mainly on its originality, and every really outstanding novel is written against the tide. Schooling, like military training, encourages conformity rather than novelty, and it could easily have extinguished Fanny's spark. She was very susceptible to literary influence,

and it eventually ruined her as a writer. *Evelina* was her only good novel. Afterwards she learnt how to write from men like Dr Johnson, and her later stories are all drab, respectable, and dull.

In 1767 Fanny's spark was still invisible to adults, although her sisters knew she was brighter than she seemed. Susan, aged ten, had begun to keep a diary, and she wrote with the intelligence of a woman. In one entry she compared Fanny with Hetty. "The characteristics of Hetty seem to be wit, generosity, and openness of heart; Fanny's—sense, sensibility, and bashfulness, and even a degree of prudery." The last word had a different meaning then: a prude was not a prig but a woman who was naturally modest, demure, and prim. "Her understanding is superior, but her diffidence gives her a bashfulness before company with whom she is not intimate, which is a disadvantage to her. My eldest sister shines in conversation, because, though very modest, she is totally free from any *mauvaise honte.* Were Fanny equally so, I am persuaded she would shine no less. I am afraid that my eldest sister is too communicative, and that my sister Fanny is too reserved."

Hetty and Susan had not long been back from Paris when their father married again. His second wife was not Dolly Young but his first wife's other friend at King's Lynn, the widow Elizabeth Allen. She brought Maria to Poland Street, and the Burney girls liked the daughter better than the mother. Maria, lively and high-spirited, called her mother "the Governor" and treated her with less respect than she got from her step-daughters. She was a good wife to Charles Burney, and an excellent hostess; but as a stepmother she had the fault of always finding fault. "Do you remember," Susan asked Fanny thirty years later, "when we so vainly struggled not to dissatisfy in days of yore, hopeless of doing more?" The girls were polite and dutiful to her for the sake of the father they loved; but they never felt her affection, and therefore had none to give in return.

One of the many things the new Mrs Burney disapproved

of at Poland Street was Fanny's habit of "scribbling." This had increased since the return of her sisters. She let Susan read her stories, and Susan loved them and encouraged her to write more. Mrs Burney disapproved; partly because she liked disapproving, and also because she thought story-writing was a waste of time and not a very ladylike occupation.

This does not mean that Mrs Burney was a philistine in her attitude to books. On the contrary, she prided herself on being one of the new "blue-stockings," the spiritual descendants of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who were beginning to invade literature. She had not written anything herself, but was well read and intelligent and could carry on a serious conversation about the arts. She encouraged the girls to read, too; but scribbling stories was a different matter.

Generally speaking, Mrs Burney did not regard novels as literature. She excepted the works of authors like Fielding and Smollet, but these were in a different class. Most novels were copies of the French romances that had delighted Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Their literary standard had declined since then, and Mrs Burney thought they were trash. So they were. Many were written by women; indeed, no woman had written a novel that was not trash, and most women's novels were considered improper. Clearly novel-writing was not a ladylike occupation.

Of course, Mrs Burney did not think anything Fanny was writing would ever be published. That was just as well for her peace of mind, for such a thought would have horrified her. She did not know what kind of stories Fanny was writing, for Fanny never showed them to anyone but Susan. Her main objection was that Fanny was wasting time that could be spent more profitably: on needlework, for example, or helping about the house. This was surely not unreasonable. If a girl of fifteen to-day spends her time scribbling secretly, instead of helping with the washing-up, her mother is not necessarily an enemy of literature if she bawls her out.

But Mrs Burney had other worries besides getting the housework done. Her main job was to marry off the girls, not

for her own sake but for theirs. The life of an old maid was pretty dreadful in those days. Although Charles Burney was a fashionable music-master, he was not over-paid and had little money to spare for dowries, so he could not buy husbands for the girls. They had to rely on their own personal attractions.

Mrs Burney had no cause for worry about her own daughter, who was bright and pretty, or about Hetty and Susan, who were also very marriageable. They had inherited or acquired some of their father's musical talent, and both of them played and sang well. They already had their admirers; and Charlotte, another bright girl, seemed likely to grow up the same way. But "poor Fan" never looked like getting a husband. Her sisters outshone her in every way. She seemed inferior in looks, accomplishments, and charm. Her scribbling habit made her less desirable than ever, and was likely to deter a suitor if she was lucky enough to get one. She would be far better off doing needlework.

It did not take Mrs Burney long to persuade Fanny to see the error of her ways. She realized that she had, as she put it, grown "too old for scribbling," and resolved to make an end of it for good. She made the great sacrifice when her father was away at Chessington and her stepmother at King's Lynn. She gathered up all her manuscripts, the product of five years' work—or rather play, in her eyes—and took them out into the paved courtyard of the house. There she burnt the lot, with Susan standing by sobbing in sympathy.

At least one complete novel went up in smoke. It was called *The History of Caroline Evelyn*, and later Fanny gave an outline of the plot. On the strength of this, most literary critics have assumed it was worthless, but the same might have been said of *Evelina* if only the plot had survived. As Fanny's work declined steadily all through her life, the novel she wrote at fifteen may have been her best.

Fanny was determined to give up writing for ever, but she could not conquer her vice. "As I am less young, I grow, I fear, less wise," she wrote a few months later, "for I cannot

any longer resist what I find to be irresistible, the pleasure of popping down my thoughts from time to time on paper." However, her stepmother's warnings were not entirely wasted. Fanny gave up writing novels, and followed Susan's example by keeping a diary. This was never burnt, and after *Evelina* it is easily the best of her works that have survived.

It was not written for publication. Fanny wrote it simply because she enjoyed doing it, and because she hoped she might enjoy reading it when she was older. It was a secret diary, addressed to "Miss Nobody," and only Susan was allowed to read it. Fanny wrote it mostly in the playroom, where she had written her early novels. In the summer the family used to go to King's Lynn for a holiday, and stayed at Mrs Burney's house. Fanny found a convenient summer-house in the garden, which she called "the Cabin," and here she continued to indulge her secret vice. But the secret did not last long. "Like a fool," she said, she left a page with a letter she had written on top of the piano. She did not discover her loss until her stepmother told her that her father had found it and put it in his pocket.

For over twenty-four hours Fanny did not dare say anything to him. Then, on a Tuesday evening, she went up to him at the piano.

"Pray, papa," she said, "have you got any papers of mine?"

"Papers of yours?" he asked. "How should I come by papers of yours?"

"I'm sure—I don't know—but—but——"

"Why do you leave your papers about the house?" Then he turned away and continued playing the piano for an hour and a half, while Fanny sat silent in a corner. At last he got up and laughed in a kindly way.

"Well, Fanny, are you in sad distress?" He did not need an answer. "Well," he said, "I'll give it you, now I see you are in such distress. But take care, my dear," he added, "of leaving your writings about the house again; suppose anybody else had found it? I declare I was going to read it

aloud." He gave her the sheet of paper, with a final warning: "If ever I find any more of your journals I vow I'll stick them up in the market-place."

Fanny destroyed the sheet of paper immediately, and did not open her journal again until the following Saturday. Then she wrote down the whole conversation, word for word. "I was so frightened that I had not the heart to write since, till now," she finished. "I should not, but that—in short, but that I cannot help it."

Her father did not disapprove of her scribbling as his wife did, but he thought she ought to be taught a lesson for her carelessness in leaving it lying about. A private diary was all very well so long as it remained private. The Burneys were respectable; they had not quite the smug respectability of the Victorian middle class or our own lower middle class, but they still attached much importance to keeping up appearances and not being gossiped about.

While they were at King's Lynn Fanny told Dolly Young about her diary, and asked if she ought to give it up. Dolly Young assured her that keeping a diary was "the most dangerous employment you can have," and the sooner she gave it up the better. "Suppose now, for example, your favourite wish were granted," said this plain spinster whose favourite wish was never granted, "and you were to fall in love, and the object of your passion were to get sight of some part which related to himself." Fanny agreed that that would be terrible, and said there would be nothing left for her to do but drown herself in the pond in St James's Park. She did not ask Dolly Young for any further advice.

Much of Fanny's diary was a brilliant portrait-gallery. Famous musicians and singers, writers and artists, came to the Burneys' house in Poland Street, to enjoy good music and good conversation. They were charmed by Hetty and Susan, and charming to Fanny, who sat quietly watching and listening; and when they had gone they all went into the diary and unknowingly became immortal. It was a gay home, and the girls had other pleasures outside. They went to

concerts and the theatre and the opera, to dancing parties and masquerades. They did not live in the world of fashion, but in the world of the arts.

Meanwhile Charles Burney was becoming a figure in the musical world, and in 1769 he received the degree of Doctor of Music at Oxford. He had now begun work on his famous *History of Music*, and his daughters helped him with the copying that had to be done. They all helped, but Fanny was the keenest and became his secretary and keeper of records. It was dull work, but useful and respectable; and she still had time to keep up her diary.

In 1770 Hetty married her cousin. She was twenty-one, and Fanny was eighteen. In the same year Dr Burney went on a tour of the Continent to collect material for his book, and had talks with famous men like Rousseau, Diderot, and Voltaire. He published his account of the tour in May 1771, and it was well received. Meanwhile the Burneys had moved from Poland Street into a larger house, in Queen's Square, in Bloomsbury, which was then almost a rural district of London. The musical and literary evenings continued, and Maria fell in love.

She fell in love with a young man named Martin Rishton, and her mother disapproved. So did Martin's uncle, and the young man was sent abroad. The romance continued secretly: so secretly that even Hetty was not told. Maria confided only in Fanny and Susan, and they were the only ones who knew when Maria slipped off to Geneva to join her lover. In May 1772 they came back—married. "Good heavens!" Fanny wrote in her diary. "What a romantic life has this beloved friend lived! I dare not commit particulars to paper. . . . What scenes we shall have!" The worst scene was when Fanny had to break the news to her stepmother, who behaved with little kindness and less sense.

At the same time Fanny found a new outlet for her incurable vice of scribbling. She began to correspond with Daddy Crisp. He encouraged her to write long letters, mostly full of amusing gossip; and he gave her some literary advice. He

told her never to frame "studied letters, that are to be correct, nicely grammatical and run in smooth periods." She was to "dash away whatever comes uppermost; the sudden sallies of imagination, clapped down on paper, just as they arise, are worth folios. Never think of being correct when you write to me," he told her. And again: "Harken, you little monkey! if you stop to consider what you say, or what may be said of you, I would not give you one fig for your letters." Fanny later called Daddy Crisp her "most judicious observer and stimulating critic," and certainly he gave her the best possible advice. It is also certain that after his death the style of her novels and even of her letters and diary lost its freshness and became more considered and artificial.

Meanwhile Dr Burney had made another tour of the Continent, and when he came back he was ill and had to work from his bed. Fanny sat beside him and helped him prepare another manuscript for the press. It was published in February 1773, and in the same year Dr Burney was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. In the same year also—in July—Fanny went to stay with Maria and her husband at Teignmouth. She wrote long letters to Susan, who passed them to her father, and then they went to Daddy Crisp. He enjoyed them so much that he sent them to his sister. Fanny was acquiring a public.

She found that in spite of her stepmother's warnings Maria and her husband were wonderfully happy. Fanny went out with them, and had her first bathe in the sea: quite an experience for a girl in those days. Women did not bathe publicly—that would have been improper—so Fanny had to get into a bathing-machine, which was wheeled by fisherwomen right into the sea. "I was terribly frightened, and really thought I should never recover from the plunge. I had not breath enough to speak for a minute or two, the shock was beyond expression great; but, after I got back to the machine, I presently felt myself in a glow that was delightful—it is the finest feeling in the world, and will induce me to bathe as often as will be safe."

She had other shocks out of the water, and one of them was Mr Crispen, "on the wrong side of an elderly man," who seemed to make a habit of chasing girls. He called her "my little Burney" and "my dove" and "my love," and once offered to show her some drawings in exchange for two kisses. "No, no, no, not that!" exclaimed Fanny. Then she thought he was just joking, and calmed down. But before long she found him "somewhat troublesome in taking, or rather making, perpetual opportunities of taking my hand," and Maria's husband had to show him the door. Fanny was sorry, all the same. "When he lets alone his gallantry he is full of information and very agreeable." She was always fond of old men.

In September she returned to London, and the following year the Burneys moved again, this time to St Martin's Street, off Leicester Square. Their new home had once been Sir Isaac Newton's, and at the top was a turret that he had used as his observatory. Fanny turned it into her "scribbling place." She thought the street "odious" and "ill built and vulgarly peopled," but it was handy for the opera and the neighbours were not all vulgar. Sir Joshua Reynolds lived in Leicester Square, and David Garrick at the near-by Adelphi; and Hetty and her husband, and Fanny's Aunts Becky and Anne, were all within easy reach.

There were now two babies in the nursery, Richard and Sarah Harriet. Charles was at Cambridge, and came home during vacations. James, now a naval lieutenant, was sailing round the world with Captain Cook. Dr Burney was still suffering from rheumatism. Friends still called, David Garrick sometimes coming in before eight in the morning. Among other visitors was James Bruce, the famous explorer of the sources of the Nile, a social celebrity of six foot four. He told Dr Burney about the primitive music in Abyssinia, and told his daughters of his horrifying experiences there. "I cannot say I was charmed with him," wrote Fanny; "for he seems rather arrogant, and to have so large a share of good opinion of himself as to have nothing left for the rest of the

world but contempt." Yet she thought he was not a fop, but "a very manly character, and looks so dauntless and intrepid so that I believe he could never in his life know what fear meant."

In the middle of 1775, when she was twenty-three, Fanny received her first proposal. It was completely unexpected, both to her and to her family: they had all given up hope long ago. Her suitor was an earnest young man named Thomas Barlow, who was unused to society but very anxious to do and say all the right things; so, of course, he looked stiff and affected, and did and said all the wrong things. "He has a great desire to please, but no elegance of manners," said Fanny when she first met him; "neither, though he may be very worthy, is he at all agreeable." But he found her very agreeable, wrote her the most absurdly high-flown love-letters, and wanted to marry her.

Mrs Burney was delighted. She had never expected such luck. And as Fanny agreed that the man was worthy there was no need for delay. But Fanny said he was not agreeable, and she wanted to send him packing right from the start. Her father told her not to rush things, but to get to know the man better before she decided. Her stepmother told her to marry him. Hetty told her to marry him. Daddy Crisp, who had never seen him and knew nothing about him, gave her the same advice. "Oh, Fan, this is not a marrying age, without a handsome fortune. Suppose you to lose your father—take in all chances. Consider then the situation of an unprotected, unprovided woman!" Her two maiden aunts made the same point with more force, urging Fanny to avoid their own fate. And they were all honestly and sincerely giving her this advice for her own sake.

Fanny resisted it, although if her father had spoken for Barlow she would have given in. "I felt the utter impossibility of resisting not merely my father's persuasion, but even his advice." He was too good a father to take advantage of that. He hoped she would marry Barlow, because he did not want her to remain an old maid; but he did not want her to

marry against her inclination. "Don't be too hasty," was all he said; and Fanny hastily sent a letter to Barlow saying she had "no intention of changing my present situation."

It was a brave decision, for Fanny's prospects were anything but bright. If no one but Barlow wanted to marry her at twenty-three she was unlikely to attract admirers when she was older. When her father died his small savings would go to his widow, and any unmarried daughters would have to work as companions or governesses or live on such family charity as they could get. In those days the dread of being an old maid was very real indeed.

But Fanny had ceased to dread it. "I have long accustomed myself to the idea of being an old maid, and the title has lost all its terrors in my ears," she told Daddy Crisp. It would be better than living the rest of her life with Barlow. "I should expire of fatigue with him." That was partly the fault of Daddy Crisp and her father. "I am much too spoilt by such men as my father and Mr Crisp to content myself with a character merely inoffensive." Her stepmother told her she would have to wait a long time before she got another proposal, and in fact she had to wait eighteen years. It was worth waiting, for when she married the French General D'Arblay, at forty-one, she married for love.

Barlow went, and James came back from his voyage with Captain Cook. It was the first voyage round the world eastward, and James himself was quite a celebrity. Other social 'lions' also came to St Martin's Street, including Prince Alexis Orlov, the favourite of the Empress Catherine II of Russia who had helped to murder her husband. He was bigger than Bruce, and Fanny "hated such monstrous tall men." The Burneys gave him a musical evening, and their house was full of lords and ladies for the occasion.

The Russian Prince was followed a month later by a "gentle savage," Omai, whom Captain Cook had brought back from Tahiti. He had just been presented to the King, and was dressed in velvet with lace ruffles and made a striking figure. He talked to Fanny, and went into the diary.

Many other celebrities followed him into her unique portrait gallery.

In 1776 the first volume of Dr Burney's *History of Music* was published. In the same year Mrs Burney was ill, and had to go away to recuperate, and Fanny stayed at home looking after her father and the younger children. She had trouble with her eyes, and could not write often to Daddy Crisp; she also had other work for her pen. She had at last broken her resolution not to write any more novels, and was busy on *Evelina.*

It was nearly ten years since she had burnt her previous novel, and this was the sequel to it: the character Evelina was the daughter of the cremated Caroline Evelyn.

Although quite a short novel, *Evelina* was divided into three parts, or volumes; and before the end of the year Fanny had finished the first two. They were written by stealth, for she had more to fear than her stepmother's disapproval. She was writing for publication, and no one must know who the author was.

Fanny Burney was not a lady of quality like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and it would not have been improper for her to publish a book; provided, of course, that it was not an improper book. *Evelina* was a model of propriety, but it was a novel; and, as Fanny said, novelists were "more numerous but less respectable" than any other class of writers. Any woman who published any kind of novel was risking her reputation.

That was not Fanny's only reason for wanting to remain anonymous. Writing, especially in the way she wrote, meant baring her thoughts, and publishing meant exposing them to the public gaze. To her prudish mind such exposure was almost indecent. And there was yet another reason for keeping it dark. She feared criticism from her friends and relations, especially her relations—above all, her stepmother, "the quarter from which I most dreaded satire."

Fanny went to great lengths to keep it dark. She had transcribed parts of the manuscript of her father's history of

music, and it occurred to her that by chance her own novel might get into the hands of the same compositor; perhaps he would recognize the writing, and the secret would be out. It was unlikely, but Fanny was taking no chances. She wrote those first two volumes again, "in a feigned hand," disguising her writing by holding the pen in an unnaturally upright position. It was hard work. "The fear of discovery, or of suspicion in the house, made the copying extremely laborious to me; for in the daytime, I could only take odd minutes, so that I was obliged to sit up the greatest part of my nights, in order to get it ready."

At last the two volumes were completely transcribed, and Fanny had to find out whether "all this fagging" had been worth while. Three people were let into the secret: Susan (who had probably been told earlier), Charlotte, and Charles. Charles was necessary because it needed a man to deal with publishers.

Fanny wrote first to Dodsley of Pall Mall, a most respectable publisher. She offered to submit the two volumes she had ready, and promised the third the following year. She did not sign the letter, and asked Dodsley to address his reply to Mr Grafton, at the Orange Coffee House, in the Haymarket.

"Mr Grafton" was Charles, and he called regularly at the Orange Coffee House until the reply came. It said that the work could not even be considered unless the publisher was told the author's name. Dodsley was too respectable for Fanny.

Next she tried Thomas Lowndes, of Fleet Street, a less fashionable publisher, and he was much more encouraging. He told the unknown author (through Mr Grafton): "I've not the least objection to what you propose, and if you favour me with a sight of your MS. I'll lay aside other business to read it and tell you my thoughts of it. With two presses I can soon make it appear in print, for now is the time for a novel."

Most publishers are still courteous to unknown authors, but it must be a long time since one was told that now is the time for a novel. It was true enough then, for English fiction

was suffering from lack of supply rather than demand. The great novelists of the century—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, and Goldsmith—were all dead, and Dr Johnson and Horace Walpole seemed to have stopped writing fiction. What was left was almost all trash.

Charles took the two volumes to Fleet Street himself, suitably disguised—muffled up in a greatcoat, with an old hat pulled down over his eyes. He went "in the dark of the evening," and left the manuscript; and then he called regularly at the Orange Coffee House until another letter for Mr Grafton came from Lowndes. "I've read and liked the MS. and if you'll send the rest I'll soon run it over," he said. Fanny had to write back and explain that the third volume was not ready yet; but that was not good enough for the publisher. "I would rather print in July than now to publish an unfinished book," he wrote on January 17, 1777. "I'll restore the MS. to the gentleman that brought it."

Fanny gave it up. "I had hardly time to write half a page in a day; and neither my health nor inclination would allow me to continue my nocturnal scribbling for so long a time as to write first, and then copy, a whole volume." The completion of *Evelina* had to wait.

But in March Daddy Crisp invited Fanny to stay at Chessington, and there she took up work again. She wrote to Susan about it, but could not bring herself to let Daddy Crisp into the secret. The work was going well when she was suddenly recalled to London to entertain Uncle Richard from Worcester and two of his children. Work on *Evelina* was again held up, but she had something to write in her diary. Dr Johnson came to St Martin's Street.

He was then at the height of his fame, the biggest 'lion' in London society, and it was bold of Dr Burney to invite him. A musical entertainment was arranged, and Hetty and Susan were playing a duet when Johnson came in. Fanny saw him with clearer eyes than Boswell's. "He is, indeed, very ill-favoured; is tall and stout; but stoops terribly; he is almost bent double. His mouth is almost constantly opening and

shutting, as if he was chewing. He has a strange method of frequently twirling his fingers, and twisting his hands. His body is in continual agitation, see-sawing up and down; his feet are never for a moment quiet; and, in short, his whole person is in perpetual motion." Later Johnson was to call Fanny his "little character-monger," but he never saw the portrait of himself she put in her private gallery.

While she was in London Fanny let her father into the secret. She told him she had written a novel, and sent the manuscript to Lowndes, but that it was not finished yet. She assured him that no one would know who had written it, and pledged him to secrecy. She did not tell him anything about the book, not even the title, and begged him not to ask her to show it to him.

Dr Burney was surprised, amused, and not greatly impressed. He promised to keep the secret, and then seems to have forgotten all about it. Afterwards Macaulay was very cross with him for taking his daughter's masterpiece so lightly; but as he had not read it, Dr Burney did not know it was a masterpiece.

Now Fanny had to go to Worcester with Uncle Richard, much against her will. She wrote long letters about the people she met there, but had no opportunity of continuing *Evelina.* It could not be published in July, and she did not return to London till August. Then she at last finished writing and transcribing the third volume, and sent it to Lowndes. On November 11 he wrote: "Sir, I've read this third Vol. and think it better than 1 and 2. If you please I'll give you twenty guineas for the MS., and without loss of time put it to press." She complained about the terms, but he would not offer any more. Looking back now, it seems a trifling sum, but Lowndes had to look forward into the unknown. He gave her another £10 after the third edition, which was not exactly generous; but Fanny demanded and got £1500 for the last novel she ever wrote, and the publishers sold only 3600 copies, so she was not quite a failure on the business side of writing.

Fanny now let her maiden aunts into the secret, and they helped her read the proofs; but she said nothing more to her father, and *Evelina* was published without his knowledge. Fanny herself did not know when it came out until January 29, 1778, when her stepmother read out the advertisement in the *London Chronicle* at the breakfast table. She had a habit of reading bits out of the paper, and there was no special reason why the announcement of the publication of a book called *Evelina*, by an anonymous author, should have caught her eye. But it did, and Fanny blushed, and Susan and Charlotte giggled; and yet still neither their father nor their stepmother guessed the truth.

Fanny did not receive any author's copies of the book, and Aunt Anne was the first of the family to get hold of one. Fanny was alarmed when she heard her aunt had been reading it aloud. But Aunt Anne told her every one loved it, and Cousin Richard especially could talk of nothing else. "I like it better and better," he said. "I have read nothing like it since Fielding's novels. I declare I know not a man breathing who is likely to be the author—unless it is my uncle." Aunt Anne begged Fanny to tell him the truth, and at last she did—but she could not tell him, she could only write it down on a piece of paper and then look out of the window while he read it. And, of course, he too was sworn to secrecy.

First novels did not become best-sellers overnight in those days, and at first sales were slow. The novel was reviewed in the *London Magazine* in February, and given only three lines. They were nice ones, though. The reviewer found "much more merit" in it than was "generally to be found among our modern novels." The *Monthly Review* noticed it in April and was more flattering. It said it was "one of the most sprightly, entertaining and agreeable productions of this kind which has of late fallen under our notice." The identity of the author was still unknown.

In May Fanny was seriously ill, and went to Chessington to get better. Susan wrote her all the news—and sent her a copy of the book, which had at last come from Lowndes.

Meanwhile one of the Worcester cousins, Bessy, had read it and guessed the truth. "I think I know a person not 100 miles from Leicester Square very capable of writing such a novel," she wrote to Susan. "Indeed, 'tis so clever and so much in her style that I cannot persuade myself to think she is not the authoress. But don't tell Fanny that I smoke her if you think she will be displeased."

During the summer the book was more widely read and talked about—and so was the mysterious author. Every one, said Susan, was asking who it could be. But it was not till June that Dr Burney heard any hint. Then one morning Charlotte saw him reading the notice in *The Monthly Review*, and then sitting silently and deep in thought. He got up—walked about the room—and drew Charlotte's attention to the review. "You know that book? Send William for it to Lowndes as if for yourself, and give it to me when we are alone."

When he read the dedication—to the author's father—he knew the truth. The next morning he spoke to Susan about it.

"Why, Susan, I have got Fan's book."

"Sir! Have you?"

"Yes—but I suppose you must not tell her—poor Fan's such a prude!"

Susan said she thought Fanny would not mind her father's knowing, and he told her what he thought of it. He told Fanny too when he went to Chessington to see her. "I have read your book, Fanny!—but you need not blush at it—it is full of merit—it is—really—extraordinary!" Fanny was crying on his shoulder now, with relief. "Upon my soul, I think it is the best novel I know excepting Fielding's. For a young woman's work I look upon it to be really wonderful!"

Then she let him tell her stepmother, and if she disapproved she did not say so; although she could hardly believe Fanny had written it by herself, and thought Susan must have helped her.

Daddy Crisp still did not know, and Fanny could not bring herself to tell him. But she showed him the book, and he asked her to read it to him. She did so in a faltering voice, and then asked him to guess the author.

"I can't guess; maybe it is you," he said.

"Pooh, nonsense!" she replied. "What should make you think of me?"

"Why, you look guilty," he said, with more reason than he knew, for he was only joking; and it was not till a few weeks later that he learnt the truth from Dr Burney.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" he said; but when he saw the author next he caught both her hands and said, "Why, you little hussy—you young devil! ain't you ashamed to look me in the face, you *Evelina* you! Why, what a dance you have led me about it! Young friend indeed! O you little hussy, what tricks you have served me!"

Then Dr Johnson read it and praised it highly, and when she heard this Fanny danced a jig round Daddy Crisp's mulberry-tree. She had good reason to be pleased, for when Dr Johnson said a book was good it became almost a social necessity to have read it.

Fanny came back to London in August, and had dinner with Dr Johnson on the way home, and he repeated his praises to her face. Every one was reading it now. Edmund Burke sat up all night to finish it. So did Sir Joshua Reynolds, who went without his meals too, and said he would give fifty pounds to know the author. Fanny did not claim the money, but she and her stepmother went to see Lowndes to find out how he was dealing with inquirers. It was the first time she had ever seen her publisher, and she was amused by his pompous self-importance. They pretended to be ordinary customers, and bought a copy of the book and then asked him who the author was. He said he did not know; and then, when Mrs Burney pressed him, that it was "a gentleman at the other end of the town." He added that he had at first thought it was Horace Walpole, but did not think so now. Finally, "to tell you the truth, madam, I have been informed

that it is a piece of real secret history, and in that case it will never be known." He gave this information "with a most important face," and Fanny began to giggle and had to turn her back on him and pretend to look out of the door.

The secret did not last much longer. If Fanny could have kept it her father could not, and there was no need for secrecy now. Only Mrs Montagu, the leader of the bluestockings, found it "vulgar"; every one else gave it nothing but praise. *The Critical Review* compared the author with Richardson, and Fanny had no further cause to worry about losing her reputation. Thanks to her, it was no longer improper for a woman to write a novel.

3

ELIZABETH FRY

When Elizabeth Fry first visited a prison she had done nothing of note except bring eight children into the world, and that was not remarkable in those days. In the next few years she had two more children and became world-famous for her prison reforms. That was most remarkable, because all the authorities and experts had told her that the prisons could not be reformed, and you might think they would know best. But with that kind of thinking it is impossible to understand any reform.

All reformers are rebels against authority. They are persons who are quicker to doubt than believe, quicker to criticize than respect; and these virtues or vices—opinions differ about which they are—usually appear in childhood. "I was disposed to a spirit of contradiction," Elizabeth Fry said, "always ready to see things a little differently from others, and not willing to yield my sentiments to theirs." Obedient children may grow up into law-abiding citizens, but they are unlikely to become reformers. The spirit of contradiction is the driving force of reform.

She was born Betsy Gurney, on May 21, 1780: the fourth child in a family of twelve. One child had already died, so she began life with two older sisters, Catherine and Rachel. Their father was a rich wool-stapler and banker. They lived in Norwich and had a summer house at Bramerton, about four miles outside the city. Here they had a lovely old-fashioned garden, and when her mother told her the story of Adam and Eve being driven out of Paradise Betsy was sure the Garden of Eden was just like the one at Bramerton.

Nine of the Gurney children were born at Norwich and Bramerton. Then, when Betsy was nearly six, the family

moved to Earlham Hall, about two miles outside the city. It was a large, old house, in the middle of a well-wooded park with a winding river flowing by. The banks of the river were a favourite haunt of the children, and they would meet there on summer evenings to walk, read, sketch, or romp. They were all girls except Samuel, the youngest; but two more boys were born at Earlham, and there were no more girls.

They were Quakers, or members of the Society of Friends. So they did not go to church, because Quakers do not believe God has special houses. They went to a meeting-house instead. There they did not sing set hymns or recite set prayers, or listen to a speech by a professional minister, for these things do not belong to the religion of the Quakers. They believe that communion with God can only be achieved directly from the soul, at first hand, and that Church ritual is only a base substitute for religion. They will not take oaths or fight in wars, because they believe that true religion means practising Christ's teaching in everyday life.

At the end of the eighteenth century there was a division within the Quaker movement between "plain Friends" and "gay Friends." Those who called themselves plain wore the simple, rather drab Quaker dress, used the forms 'thee' and 'thou' in speech, and practised various forms of self-denial: they did not play cards, or go to the theatre, or dance, or make music. The "gay Friends," on the other hand, dressed according to the current fashion and went to the usual entertainments. The Gurneys were gay.

They were very gay indeed. They wore bright scarlet coats, and once stood in a scarlet line across the road to force the mail-coach to stop—just for fun, of course. They even wore their scarlet coats on Sundays, when they went to the Friends' Meeting House in Goats Lane. They did not like going there. "Goats was disagreeable" was a common entry in their diaries, and it became abbreviated to "Goats was dis." Sometimes it was "that disgusting Goats." It often spoiled the rest of the day, making them all feel "rather goatified and cross."

Their mother taught them the Scriptures. She did not

teach them prayers, but she taught them when not to pray. She told them it was good to pray when they were in the right mood, but bad to pray merely from habit. She taught them as well as she could; but, according to Elizabeth Fry, "her understanding was not fully enlightened to the fulness of the gospel truth." She was a loving mother, and tried to bring them up to love rather than fear. Here also she was not entirely successful, with Betsy, at least.

"My remembrance is of the pleasure of my childhood being almost spoiled through fear, and my religious impressions, such as I had, were accompanied by gloom." The story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was one cause of her fear, and there were many others. She was terrified of firearms, and once refused to go out with her parents because there was a gun in the carriage. "I was also exceedingly afraid of the dark, and suffered so acutely from being left alone without a light after I went to bed that I believe my nervous system was injured in consequence of it; also, I had so great a dread of bathing—to which I was at times obliged to submit—that the first sight of the sea, when we were as a family going to stay by it, would make me cry; indeed, fear was so strong a principle in mind as greatly to mar the natural pleasure of childhood." When she looked back on her childhood she thought that fear "would have been much more subdued, and great suffering spared, by its having been still more yielded to; by having a light left in my room, not being long left alone; and never forced to bathe." But she was thankful that her mother was as careful and wise as she was, and she loved her dearly. "I never remember, as a little child, but once being punished by my mother; and she then mistook tears of sorrow for tears of naughtiness, a thing that deeply impressed me, and I have never forgotten the pain it gave me." Tears came too easily to Betsy. "I frequently cried if looked at, and used to say that my eyes were weak."

Mrs Gurney educated the girls herself. She was well read and intelligent, and believed that women should be well

educated. She taught her daughters three languages—English, because it was "necessary and very agreeable"; Latin, because it was "the most permanent"; and French, because it was "the most in general request." (She wrote this in 1792.) She also taught them what she called "the simple beauties of mathematics" and "ancient and modern history, geography, and chronology." Finally came natural history, including drawing from nature. Mrs Gurney herself kept special beds in the garden for wild flowers, and collected shells.

But she was a realist, and knew that the only career open to her daughters was marriage; so she also taught them needlework, "the common proprieties of a table," household economy, good manners, and "that polished behaviour that adds a charm to every qualification."

Betsy was a poor scholar. She disliked learning languages, and, indeed, all formal instruction. She wanted to know things, but preferred finding out in her own way to being told. "I was considered and called very stupid and obstinate." She admitted her obstinacy, and was always proud of it; but she thought "the name of being stupid really tended to make me so, and discouraged my efforts to learn. I remember having a poor, not to say low opinion of myself, and used to think that I was so very inferior to my sisters Catherine and Rachel." She also thought education ceased to be useful when it was not easy and agreeable, and that the greatest care was needed "not to force children to learn too much, as it not only injures them but gives them a distaste for intellectual pursuits." That was a revolutionary view in those days, and it still has its opponents to-day.

Of all the Gurney girls Betsy was the least gay, and sometimes she was morose. She had fits of depression, and was often ill, although there was nothing physically wrong with her. "I suffered much in my youth from the most tender nervous system. . . . I have always thought being forced to bathe was one cause of this, and I mention it because I believe it a dangerous thing to do to children." So probably does every one else who was forced to bathe as a child. She

was very emotional and terrified that her mother would die; and the thought so preyed on her that she used to wish that "two large walls might crush us all together, that we might die at once and thus avoid the misery of each other's death." She rarely left her mother's side, and "watched her when asleep in the day with exquisite anxiety, and used to go gently to her bedside to listen, from the awful fear that she did not breathe."

Then her mother died.

Betsy was twelve, Rachel fourteen, and Catherine sixteen. There were eight younger ones, down to Daniel, who was under two. "Here then we were left," wrote Catherine, "I not seventeen, at the head, wholly ignorant of common life from the retirement in which we had been educated, quite unprepared for filling an important station and unaccustomed to act on independent principle. Still, my father placed me nominally at the head of the family—a continual weight and pain which wore my health and spirits. I never again had the joy and glee of youth."

They had a governess (whom they all hated), but she seems to have been treated more like a servant than a person in authority. Certainly she did not succeed Mrs Gurney in the classroom. She may have taught them the proprieties of the table, manners, and "polished behaviour," but it was left to Catherine to continue the instruction in three languages and in the simple beauties of mathematics. She did her job extraordinarily well, perhaps even better than her mother; for if she had less knowledge she knew how to teach. "Kitty treats us as though we were reasonable creatures," wrote Louisa at the age of eleven. "I hate the common way of teaching children; people treat them as if they were idiots, and never let them judge for themselves." This was probably a dig at the governess, whom Louisa could not stand. "I cannot bear strict authority over me," she wrote. "I do from the bottom of my heart hate the preference shown in all things to my elders merely because they have been in the world a little longer. I do love equality and true democracy." Sometimes

Kitty came in for criticism by Louisa. "She now and then takes us up and does not allow us to have any opinion." But that was exceptional. "These things would not be observed in anyone else, but she is usually so kind, so good, and so charming that even a cool word seems odd in her."

All this was in Louisa's diary, or journal; and it was not a secret journal, like Fanny Burney's, but written under Catherine's eyes and, indeed, at her command. All the girls had to write journals. This was not an original idea, for the practice was a common part of the system of education of girls in middle-class homes. (The Burneys were just emerging from the lower middle class, which was then, as it is now, the stronghold of English respectability; the Gurneys were their social superiors, and therefore not so proper.) Keeping a journal was good practice in writing English, and it also had a moral purpose. Girls were told to use it as a confessional, writing down their faults so that they could amend them. Candour was encouraged and privacy respected.

The practice doubtless appealed especially to Catherine, as it made no demands on her time. The journals were written up every day after tea, and afterwards the girls read out such bits as they thought suitable for the others to hear.

The girls still went regularly to Goats—except when they could get out of it. The sick-list was always long on Sundays. "We three have been blessed with staying at home lately because of our coughs," wrote Louisa. "I am always so happy to escape from the claws of Goats." Richenda was equally candid. "I had a truly uncomfortable cloudy sort of meeting. It was real bliss to hear the clock strike twelve. What an impatient disposition of mine! I sometimes feel so extremely impatient for Meeting to break up that I cannot, if you would give me the world, sit still. Oh, how I long to get a broom and bang all the old Quakers, who do look so triumphant and disagreeable." Nowadays Goats was almost always "dis."

Religion cannot be inherited, and the Quaker faith especially has to be learnt afresh by each generation. Its lack of

dogma allows exceptional freedom of thought, and the Gurney girls thought freely in a free-thinking age. Deism, rationalism, and atheism had come in from the Continent and reached Norwich. The Gurney girls read books that were forbidden to other girls because they were dangerous and unsuitable—the books of Rousseau, Voltaire, Godwin, Tom Paine, and other sceptics. They mixed with sceptics, and became sceptical themselves. From the age of fourteen, Betsy said, she had "very sceptical or deistical principles. I seldom or never thought of religion."

Their father was a Quaker by birth and habit rather than conviction, and at first he did not interfere. But his brother Joseph, a plain Friend and an elder of the Meeting, was shocked by their irreligion and demanded action. The girls' father made an effort, which they did not appreciate. "I read half a Quaker's book through with my father before meeting," wrote Louisa. "I am quite sorry to see him grow so Quakerly." As it happened, almost the only religious influence the girls had at this time came from a young man named John Pitchford, who was courting Rachel; and in Uncle Joseph's eyes his was almost the influence of the devil, for he was a Roman Catholic.

Rachel, according to Catherine, was "all activity and vigour" and "full of playfulness." She was the beauty of the family, and the sweetest singer. She helped Kitty to teach the younger girls, and Betsy also sometimes lent a hand; although as her own education, according to her daughters, was "defective and unfinished," she could not teach them much. The ever-critical Louisa approved of Rachel as a teacher but not of Betsy, whom she found too bossy. "One of my chief faults is speaking unkindly to Betsy. She does so provoke me. She behaves in some things so aristocratically because she is the eldest, and nothing makes me so angry as that." But Louisa was fond of her out of class. "To Betsy I feel a particular sort of attachment; her ill-health and sweetness draw my heart to her entirely." She was still the delicate one. "Betsy is so ill, I look forward with the most gloomy

thoughts concerning her," wrote Louisa. It was nervous trouble, and it did not need much to give her a nervous breakdown. She got more than she deserved.

She was not yet sixteen when a young man came and wooed her and won her, and made her the happiest girl in the world. He was a Quaker from Birmingham, named James Lloyd, a son of the founder of Lloyds Bank. His suit was approved, and he and Betsy were as good as engaged, when he suddenly broke it off and nearly broke her heart. "I dare say he might be said to have done me hurt in his time," was all she ever said about it afterwards, but at the time the hurt was anguish. It seems that her father took or sent her away to recover. "I do not know what we shall do when Betsy comes home, for we are all afraid of her now, which is very shocking," wrote Louisa in April 1796. "Dearest Betsy! She seems to have no one for her friend, for none of us are intimate with her."

What Betsy thought is not known, for in middle age she destroyed all her journals up to the end of 1796. In their place she left a brief sketch of her early life, from which I have already quoted; but her sisters' journals tell more about her. She recovered from her sorrow, and tried to be gay again. "Betsy went to the assembly last night and danced a great deal," wrote Louisa. "How most droll! quite a new excursion!" It was not so droll for Betsy, and the first entry in the journal she preserved is sombre enough: "January, 1797. My mind is in so dark a state that I see everything through a black medium."

Betsy's journal differed greatly from those of her sisters. It told far less about what was happening around her, and far more about what was going on in her own mind. The other girls only wrote down their faults because they were told to; to Betsy self-analysis and self-criticism were of absorbing interest. Her introspection was morbid. "I may by degrees become a despicable character, and a curse to society." The least worldly of them all, she was constantly reproaching herself for her worldliness, which led her to "love of pomp,

pride, vanity, jealousy and ambition," to thoughts about "dress and such trifles," and to indulging in "novels and scandal." She was developing an enormous sense of guilt.

In 1797 the Duke of Gloucester was stationed at Norwich with his regiment and he and some of his officers accepted an invitation to visit Earlham. "There was amazing fuss made about his coming," wrote Louisa. The house was in turmoil, and so was Betsy's conscience. "Why do I so much wish for the Prince to come? Pride, alas! is the cause." The great day came and went. "Prince William has been here with a great deal of company; I like him vastly," reported Louisa; while Betsy wrote: "I met the Prince, it showed me the folly of the world; my mind feels very flat after this storm of pleasure."

The Prince kept his carriage waiting two hours while he listened to the girls' singing, and he paid another visit soon afterwards. This time they took him away from the older folk to a private room, and travestied a meeting at Goats for his amusement. "I never saw anything so droll," wrote Richenda, then in her fifteenth year. "Rachel gave him a most capital sermon in the Quaker's strain." After dinner Rachel sang, and when the Prince had gone there was dancing—"the finest dance I ever had," said Richenda. "All joined, single and married, old and young, little and great. I had no idea that gay company could be as pleasant as it was."

The Gurneys' hospitality was returned, and sometimes the girls went to three or four parties a week. "We danced from seven to twelve. I don't know when I enjoyed dancing so much," was a typical entry in Richenda's diary. Louisa, getting on for thirteen, was enjoying herself just as much, and before the year was out she had her first kiss. "Young Sam Hoare was most disgusting; we were on most good terms the first part of the evening, but at last he went so far as to give me a kiss; it was most disgusting. Still," she added, perhaps less dutifully, "I was very agreeable last night; I felt so both in mind and body." Ten years later she married Sam Hoare, who became one of Elizabeth Fry's greatest allies in prison reform.

Rachel, the gayest of them all, whose singing and miming had so delighted the Prince, was having a more serious affair. She fell in love with Henry Enfield, and would have married him if she could; but he was no more suitable than the Catholic Pitchford, for he was a Unitarian. Pitchford had already been banished because of his religion, and now Uncle Joseph persuaded his brother to send Enfield away. He and Rachel continued to write, but the pressure against her was too strong. She lost her lover, and most of her gaiety too; and the beauty of the family was the only one apart from Catherine who never married.

Meanwhile Betsy was still taking stock. "I am seventeen to-day. Am I a happier or a better creature than I was this time twelvemonths? I know I am happier; I think I am better. I hope I shall be much better this day year than I am now." She was certainly in better health. "It is a great comfort to me that life is short, and soon passes away—yet it is certainly a pleasure or blessing to exist. I think I have now no reason to wish to die, I am so well." The death-wish was a recurrent theme in her early journal, and death was one of her three great fears in life. The others were darkness and the sea. In seaside holidays in her childhood the bathing women had ducked her three times in the icy water, and she knew what it felt like to drown; now the fears came back to her in her dreams. "I never missed a week or a few nights without dreaming I was nearly being washed away by the sea, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another; and I felt all the terror of being drowned, or hope of being saved."

Her dreams increased her feeling of insecurity. "I am like a ship put out to sea without a pilot; I feel my heart and mind so over burdened I want some one to lean upon." Again she catalogued her faults and made fresh resolves. "I must not flirt; I must not ever be out of temper with the children; I must not contradict without a cause; I must not mump when my sisters are liked and I am not; I must not allow myself to be angry; I must not exaggerate, which I am inclined to do. I must not give way to luxury; I must not be

BETSY GURNEY, AGED ABOUT NINETEEN
From a drawing by Amelia Alderson (later Opie)

ELIZABETH FRY
After C. R. Leslie

ELIZABETH FRY ENTERING NEWGATE PRISON

After Mrs. E. M. Ward

ELIZABETH FRY READING TO THE PRISONERS

After Jerry Barrett

idle in mind.... I must beware of being a flirt, it is an abominable character; I hope I shall never be one, and yet I fear I am one now a little . . . my inclinations lead me to be an idle, flirting, worldly girl."

Other inclinations led her to be religious.

She had no faith, but she wanted to have faith; she had what William James later called "the will to believe." She thought of religion as a possible pilot for her ship and something to lean on; not as an escape from the world, but to help her to live in it better. "My idea of religion is not for it to unfit us for the duties of life, like a nun who leaves them for prayer and thanksgiving; but I think it should stimulate and capacitate us to perform these duties properly."

Three months after her seventeenth birthday she wrote in her journal: "I do not know if I shall not soon be rather religious, because I have thought lately what a support it is through life; it seems so delightful to depend upon a superior power for all that is good.... I think anybody who had real faith could never be unhappy." Even if the foundations of religion were false, she thought, it could still be useful; and although "religion has been misused and corrupted, that is no reason why religion itself is not good." But "I fear being religious, in case I should be enthusiastic." The last word meant extravagant and fanatical then, and Betsy did not want to be a religious fanatic.

Some of her friends advised her to read books on Christianity, but she refused. "I said till I felt the want of religion myself I would not read books of that kind; but if ever I did, would judge clearly for myself by reading the New Testament, and when I had seen for myself I would then see what others said."

Four months later the idea was still nagging her. "A thought passed my mind that if I had some religion I should be superior to what I am." She still had an overpowering sense of guilt. "I think I am by degrees losing many excellent qualities. I am more cross, more proud, more vain, more extravagant. I lay it to my great love of gaiety and the world.

I feel, I know I am falling. I do believe if I had a little true religion, I should have a greater support than I have now." But "I have the greatest fear of religion, because I never saw a person religious who was not enthusiastic."

A month later the death-wish reappeared. "I must die! I shall die! wonderful, death is beyond comprehension." Wonderful, but fearful; and "what a comfort must a real faith in religion be, in the hour of death; to have a firm belief of entering into everlasting joy. I have a notion of such a thing, but I am sorry to say I have no real faith in any sort of religion." But could not faith be acquired? "If religion be a support, why not get it?" It was not so easy. "I don't feel any real religion; I should think those feelings impossible to obtain, for even if I thought all the Bible was true I do not think I could make myself feel it. I think I never saw any person who appeared so totally destitute of it. I fear I am by degrees falling away from the path of virtue and truth." But four days later, "my mind is in a state of fermentation, I believe I am going to be religious or some such thing." It was a false alarm. Two days later "I am a bubble, without reason, without beauty of mind or person; I am a fool. I daily fall lower in my own estimation."

Betsy still went to Goats with the others, and it meant no more to her than it did to them. She escaped when she could on grounds of ill health, and Uncle Joseph spoke to her sharply about it. But she says it was curiosity rather than a sense of duty that made her attend on February 4, 1798, although she was not feeling at all well. A famous Quaker from America was expected to speak. His name was William Savery. He changed her life.

Savery also kept a journal, and his entry for this date shows that he also thought that Goats was "dis." He saw "very few middle-aged or young persons who had a consistent appearance in their dress," and thought it "the gayest Meeting of Friends I ever sat in, and was grieved to see it." No doubt he was grieved by the sight of the seven Gurney girls, sitting in a row under the gallery in their bright scarlet

coats. He might have been especially grieved by Betsy, who was wearing purple boots with scarlet laces.

Savery said he expected to pass the meeting "in silent suffering, but at length believed it most for my peace to express a little." According to Pitchford, who went to hear him, he expressed more than a little. "His sermon was the best I have ever heard among Quakers, so full of candour and liberality. My only objection to it was its excessive length —two hours and a half."

It was not too long for Betsy. After the meeting Uncle Joseph entertained Savery to dinner, and Betsy went too. "I felt rather odd as I was the only gay person." She found him pleasing, "although there was something of the totem of quakers about him." She told him that her "principles were not Friendly," but said she would go with him to another meeting in the evening; and Uncle Joseph arranged for her and Savery to travel there alone in a carriage. Savery spoke again, and afterwards he and Betsy had another carriage ride by themselves.

"Friend Savery has been here, who seems a charming man and a most liberal-minded Quaker," Richenda wrote the next day. "Betsy, who spent all yesterday with him, not only admires but quite loves him." Richenda thought that showed her good taste, for Savery was "quite different from the common run of disagreeable Quaker preachers"—which showed that, after all, "in every society and sect there is always something good and worthy to be found."

Betsy herself wrote: "I have had a faint light spread over my mind.... It has caused me to feel a little religion.... I wish the state of enthusiasm I am in may last, for to-day I have felt *that there is a God*." She also confessed she had slept little that night, and "dreamt nor thought of anything but this man and what had passed." She "loved him as a messenger of good tidings," and "could almost have gone to America with him." But in his own journal he hardly mentioned her.

He had gone by Tuesday, when Betsy rode to Norwich,

and "meeting and being looked at with apparent admiration by some officers brought on vanity; and I came home as full of the world as I went to town full of heaven." Heaven was still remote the following Sunday, when she went to Goats again, and there was no Savery. "To-day I have felt all my old irreligious feelings."

A fortnight later her father took her to London, probably at her own request. "I must be very careful not to get vain or silly," she told herself. "But if I see William Savery I shall not, I doubt, be over fond of gaieties." She saw him all right, in between visits to friends and the theatre, and assured herself she did not like plays; but she went to more theatres, and then to the opera. "I was painted a little, I had my hair dressed, and did look pretty for me." The Prince of Wales was there. "I own I do love grand company. I felt more pleasure in looking at him than in seeing the rest of the company or hearing the music." It was all vanity, and Savery would not have been pleased, but it was not so easy to give up gaiety.

Betsy spent seven weeks in London, and then her father took her back to Earlham. A fortnight later she received a letter from Savery. "I cannot well express what I felt at receiving it." Gaiety was soon forgotten. "At this time the first object of my mind is religion." She had her old dream of being nearly washed away by the sea, but this time it was different: "I dreamed the sea was coming as usual to wash me away, but I was beyond its reach; beyond its powers to wash me away." She did not have that dream again, and began to feel faith. "I feel there is a God and immortality, happy, happy thought."

Her sisters were quite disturbed. "I have felt extremely uncomfortable about Betsy's Quakerism, which I saw, to my sorrow, increasing every day," wrote Richenda. At fifteen, she herself had no religious worries. "Kitty read the New Testament to us, which I was unusually interested in, but at this time I do not believe in Christ." Later she joined the Church of England and married a vicar.

Betsy's eighteenth birthday came and passed, and her Quakerism deepened. "I really think I shall turn plain Friend." Her sisters did not like the idea, and Rachel bluntly suggested the obvious reason. Betsy reported their conversation in her journal. "Rachel has just said she thinks I am *in love* with W. Savery. I answered I did not think I was but own I felt not clear in my own mind respecting him. I think I may love a person as I love him without *being in love*, but I doubt it. I first loved him for his religion, but the feelings of human nature are very apt to join in with the superior feelings of the heart. I don't think I am in love with him. I should be grieved to think I was. I think it a wrong suspicion to enter my mind but I fear I shall never, no never, see him again."

She saw him once again, at his farewell meeting. He was going back to America, and Betsy gave him a keepsake. "My dear, dear William Savery," she confided to her journal, "I long to know how he liked my pocket-book that I gave him." But that was the end, and it had to be. William Savery was married, and going back to his wife.

"The last year has been the happiest I have experienced for some time," Betsy wrote on her eighteenth birthday. Three weeks later: "I really think I shall turn plain Friend." Meanwhile there were others to think of, not only in the family. Even a gay Friend could be of some use in the world.

Betsy had always had a yearning to do good. "I love to feel for the sorrows of others, to pour wine and oil into the wounds of the afflicted," she wrote before she had heard of William Savery. To "do what I can to alleviate the sorrows of others, exert what power I have to increase happiness," was one of her earliest ambitions. The Quakers have always been a charitable people. To them the relief of suffering is not just generosity, but a part of their religion. The poor and sick of Norwich already had reason to bless the Gurneys. Now Betsy wanted to help them more. She spent much of her time with a retired servant named Bob, who was dying. She read the Bible to him and comforted him. And she

founded a private Sunday School for the poor children of Norwich.

It began modestly enough, with a single pupil named Billy. He came to the Hall on Sunday evenings, and in the attic Betsy read stories from the Bible to him for an hour. She hoped other children would come. She hoped to improve their morality. "I believe I cannot exert myself too much, there is nothing gives me such satisfaction as instructing the lower classes of people."

A few weeks later she had to leave Billy, for her father decided to take the family on a tour of Wales and Southern England. He took all seven girls, and they were away for six weeks. They saw beautiful places, visited friends and relations, and went to dances and other entertainments. Betsy considered "dancing and music the best pleasures in life"—and hoped to give them up. "I still continue my belief that I shall turn plain Quaker." Her belief was strengthened by visits to plain Quakers, including Cousin Priscilla and a well-known Friend named Deborah Darby, who prophesied great things for Betsy. "I only fear she says too much of what I am to be. A light to the blind; speech to the dumb; and feet to the lame; can it be?"

When they returned to Earlham Betsy continued her good works, visiting the poor and sick in Norwich, cutting out clothes for them at home, and resuming her private Sunday School. Billy was joined by other children, until there were so many that Betsy had to look for bigger accommodation. She took over a vacant laundry, and eventually had a class of seventy "schollers," as she called them: her sisters called them "Betsy's Imps." They were wild and ragged, and had never been to any kind of school before; and Betsy taught them as well as she could, poor scholar though she was herself, and gave them the only education most of them were ever to receive. She taught them without books or pictures, and without any help.

She was becoming a plain Friend, converting herself by easy stages. The scarlet coat had gone, and she dressed only

in quiet colours; but she still danced sometimes, if only—she told herself—for her sisters' sake. Her sense of guilt deepened, until at last she refused to dance with her own brother, and felt guilty for that, too. Her sisters were kind and sympathetic as they watched her change, but they did not like it. "We all feel about it alike, and are truly sorry that one of us seven should separate herself in principles, actions, and appearance from the rest," wrote Richenda. It was not only her sisters who disapproved. "My father not appearing to like all my present doing has been rather a cloud over my mind," Betsy wrote, and that was the hardest to bear.

But one person liked her better plain, and that was Joseph Fry.

His family were tea-importers and bankers, and among the richest Quakers in the country. They were also among the plainest. "Young fry," as he went down in Betsy's journal, could not have been more eligible. But he was shy and had little charm, and when he visited Earlham the girls thought him rough and even unmannerly. Their father thought he would make an excellent son-in-law, and gave him permission to speak to Betsy soon after her nineteenth birthday. She knew she might "never have another chance of marrying so well," but refused. Her father did not press her, and the next day he took her away on another trip, this time to Scotland and the north of England.

She visited a Quaker school at Ackworth, and the Quaker "Retreat" for the insane at York; and at Edinburgh she met an American Friend, who made her think of "dear William Savery." Then she went back to Earlham, and "young fry" called again. Her sisters had got used to his blunt ways and were more friendly to him; and soon Betsy was the only one who did not want him to be her husband. "Poor Joseph," as she thought of him now, was sent away again.

In February 1800 Betsy went to London again, and "poor Joe Fry" was told that it would be better for him not to try to see her. Betsy explained to herself that she did not want to marry at all, as she feared being a wife and mother might

not suit her new religious life. If she had to look after a husband and children what time would she have to be a light to the blind, speech to the dumb, feet to the lame? Her change from gay to plain Friend was now nearly complete, and she was "not at liberty to say what the future might produce." She might feel free to marry later, but "at this time I am not inclined to marry anybody, and am not in love with any person." Then she went to see the Hoares, and "the Roaches were there, who I admire, particularly Banjamin who reminded me of William Savery. I think I felt too flirty with him. . . ." She could not feel flirty with Joe Fry. "I like him as my friend but dislike him as my lover."

She saw him again at another friend's house, and was not so sure. "I was rather cross with him, but as the evening advanced I grew more comfortable—things brightened and I enjoyed his company. I dreamed pleasantly about him."

Betsy returned to Earlham, and still poor Joseph hoped. He wrote to her, and she replied. Encouraged, he went to see her again, a few days after her twentieth birthday. He asked her again. She was undecided. She thought she might marry him after all. She cried a great deal. Then "painful feelings towards Joseph began to enter my mind." They passed. They came back—she felt "a sort of distance and almost dislike." But they spent a pleasant afternoon together, and Betsy thought they could be happy together. Her feelings towards him became "calm and pleasant," and she looked forward cheerfully to their marriage. She never pretended she was in love with him.

They married in August, at Goats, which had never been less "dis." It proved a very happy marriage.

Betsy continued to educate her "Imps" until a week before the wedding, and then she took them into the summer-house and said good-bye. "There were about eighty-six of them, many of them wept," she wrote. "When they went away I shed my tears also." She was sorry to give up her first original good work. She hoped she would find the opportunity to help others somewhere else. She did.

4

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

WHEN she was famous the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* used to say that it was her Aunt Mary who first made her aware of the horrors of slavery. This aunt had married an English settler in Jamaica, and had been appalled by the cruelty shown towards the slaves. "I often heard her say," Mrs Stowe recalled, "that she frequently wished that the island might sink in the ocean with all its sin and misery, and that she might sink with it." As a matter of fact, she did not hear her aunt say anything of the kind, or if she did she was too young to understand it; for Aunt Mary died a few weeks after Harriet's second birthday. But Harriet was never a stickler for the literal truth, and, as she almost certainly heard Aunt Mary's tales from the rest of the family, there is no reason to doubt their influence on her.

Harriet Beecher was born on June 14, 1811, in Litchfield, Connecticut—a state in which slavery was legal, although there were not many slaves. Her father, Lyman Beecher, was a Calvinist clergyman, a minister of the Congregational Church. She had three elder brothers and two elder sisters; Catharine, the eldest child, was already nearly ten. Her father was sorry that Harriet was a girl. He wanted boys because they also could become ministers; and his authority over his family was so strong that in fact all his seven sons were ordained. But none preached to such a big audience or with such remarkable effect as the girl who grieved her father because she was not a boy.

Lyman Beecher grieved a good deal about his children. "My heart sinks within me at the thought that every one of my dear children is without God in the world, and without

Christ and without hope," he once wrote. (His two eldest sons were already training for the ministry at the time.) "I have no child prepared to die." To a Calvinist, preparation for death was the most important thing in life. Good works were of no help when it came to the all-important matter of avoiding eternal damnation. The only key to the Kingdom of Heaven was a declaration of faith and trust in God's mercy, and there was no hope for anyone who had not been 'saved.' Lyman Beecher loved saving people. Indeed, he was only sad when he was not on the track of a sinner, so perhaps his children's spiritual shortcomings did not cause him as much grief as he said. There was nothing he liked better than an evangelical man-hunt, although he enjoyed hunting, shooting, and fishing, too. He chased sinners and rabbits with equal zeal, and admitted that the sensations were much the same.

He was already a very famous preacher when Harriet was born. He had tremendous energy, and preached almost every day. He also started a reform society, led revivals, founded a Church magazine, wrote tracts, argued about doctrine and policy, and acted as counsel in Church trials. He loved hair-splitting and dialectical subtleties; absolutely sincere in his aims, he was often crafty and cunning in his choice of means. To most Christians outside the Congregational Church he was a narrow-minded Puritan, but to the 'Old School' of Calvinists he was an advanced thinker and heretic himself, and, indeed, was called to account for his views before an ecclesiastical court.

At home the festive celebration of Christmas and Easter was regarded as sinful, and novels were banned as works of the devil. Yet, although he demanded instant obedience from his children, his household was anything but dull. He was too erratic and untidy to impose any strict order and discipline, and he had far too much sense of fun. His children loved him. When one of the younger ones went to wake him up in the morning he used to pretend there was a lion under the bed waiting to bite his toes, and he would not get up till the child had explored and found it safe. He had fits of

despair and exaltation, and they never knew what he would do next. Once Catharine, all dressed up to go out, walked through the kitchen when he was thinking about his sermon there; and suddenly he picked her up and plunged her in the wash-tub fully clothed—"to see what she would do." He had a violent temper, but let it out mostly on a fiddle, which he played terribly badly. He suffered from digestive trouble and thought he was dying of cancer or consumption. Every now and then he called the family together and announced that the end was at hand, reducing them all to tears. The next morning he was likely to wake them at dawn and take them off to gather chestnuts.

He was not quite truthful or candid. None of the Beechers were. He dressed up dull facts to make them good stories, and he believed in telling the public what he thought the public ought to know. Harriet had the same characteristic all her life. Elizabeth Barrett Browning summed it up when she suggested that "her mouth was not quite frank."

Lyman Beecher was a healthy man for all his complaints, and lived to be eighty-seven. It was his wife who had consumption, and she died when Harriet was five. Lyman Beecher was heartbroken, but pretended he was delighted. Part of his work as a Congregational minister was telling the bereaved to rejoice, not mourn; for man's chief aim was to reach Heaven, and those who had been saved and went early were all the more blessed. Now he told his children to rejoice, and he said he was rejoicing himself in his replies to sympathetic letters; and he tried hard to believe it was true.

Harriet had two younger brothers, and the house was overcrowded; so Harriet went to Nutplains, near Guilford, to stay with her godmother, Aunt Harriet. She was a strict aunt, and no romping or shouting was allowed. Harriet was trained to be docile and submissive, and had set hours for sewing and knitting and learning the Catechism. But Aunt Harriet meant well, and she also worried about young Harriet's spiritual welfare. The matter was difficult, for Aunt Harriet herself was not a Congregationalist but very High Church. Much

as she admired Lyman Beecher, she thought he was a heretic because he was a Calvinist, and was very doubtful whether he would be saved.

So she taught Harriet the Church Catechism. Then her conscience worried her, as this seemed a breach of trust. The girl's father would surely want her to learn the Congregational Catechism: so Aunt Harriet decided the only solution was to teach her both. "At this lengthening of exercise I secretly murmured," Harriet wrote later. She murmured more openly when she began the task. The first question of the Church Catechism—"What is your name?"—was simple, if unnecessary; the first question of the Congregational Catechism was "What is the chief end of man?"—and at the age of five Harriet preferred her aunt's religion. In the end Aunt Harriet said she could put off learning the Congregational Catechism until she returned home.

She stayed with Aunt Harriet—and a very kindly grandmother, who took some of the stiffness out of the house—for nearly a year. Then she returned to Litchfield, where Aunt Esther was in charge.

Aunt Esther had been persuaded to take over the household against her will. Although still in her early thirties, she was already a prim and fussy old maid. She hated untidiness and disorder: "a place for everything, and everything in its place" was her motto, and she liked a home to be spick and span. It was no wonder that she was reluctant to take over the Beecher household. Outside there was the parson's horse, the cow, and pigs; in and out there were cats and dogs, and many rats, as well as the children. The only servants were two Negresses—bondservants, not slaves. The house was old and overcrowded and difficult to keep clean. But, having taken the job on, Aunt Esther did her best. She was very charming when she relaxed, and both Lyman Beecher and the children were fond of her; still, her régime was a strain on them all, and no one was sorry when it ended.

It lasted a year. Before the end of that period Lyman Beecher was on the look-out for a second wife, and he found

her in Boston when he went there to preach. She was young and beautiful and devout, and he wasted no time. They were engaged before they had known each other a week, and married soon after.

The new Mrs Beecher accompanied her husband to Litchfield, and had a mixed welcome. Harriet, now six, was openly resentful. "Because you have come and married my pa," she told her stepmother, "when I am big enough I mean to go and marry your pa." The older children were more polite, and gave her respect if not love. She was not a lovable woman. She maintained Aunt Esther's rules of conduct, but they were no longer tempered with Aunt Esther's charm. She was, Harriet said later, "of a type noble but severe, naturally hard, correct, exact, and exacting." Her brother Henry described her as "a woman of profound veneration rather than of a warm and loving nature." Both these descriptions were probably generous.

Harriet was going to school now, hand in hand with her younger brother Henry, the closest to her of the whole family for the rest of her life. She was growing up a quiet, shy girl, intelligent and fond of reading, although there were few books in the house that could interest her, and apparently no children's books at all. But when she went through a barrel full of old sermons and tracts up in the attic she came across a copy of the *Arabian Nights*. She read it and was fascinated. Then Aunt Esther introduced her to Byron's poetry, and, as Lyman Beecher was fond of Byron, this was allowed.

When she was nearly seven her father was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by a Vermont college, and for the rest of his life every one called him Dr Beecher. In the same year his tenth child was born, a boy named Frederick; but he was never to be a preacher, for two years later he caught scarlet fever and died. Harriet was the only other member of the family to catch the disease, and she was dangerously ill.

Meanwhile Catharine had been studying music and drawing in Boston. She was twenty-one when she finished her

training, and got a job as a teacher in a girl's school in New London, Connecticut. There she fell in love with a young professor of mathematics and science at Yale University, Alexander Fisher, and they became engaged. Meanwhile another baby was expected at Litchfield, and Mrs Beecher took in four boarders to increase the family income. Harriet went and stayed with her grandmother for a few months, returning to Litchfield in the spring of 1822. Catharine was there, and her fiancé had gone abroad to buy equipment for the university. Then came the news that he had been drowned in a shipwreck off the Irish coast.

Catharine was not only broken-hearted; she was terrified that she would never be reunited with her lover after death. For he had never been 'converted'; he had died before he was prepared for death. Catharine sought comfort from her father, who said that perhaps the young man had seen the light at the end, but he thought it was unlikely; most probably he was damned, and no doubt this was a warning to Catharine to give heed to the state of her own soul. This homily did not have the effect he intended. Catharine went to stay with Alexander's parents, and taught their daughters and remained with the family a year. During that time she tried to find out whether her fiancé had achieved salvation, and a private journal of his that she discovered made it pretty clear that he had not. Catharine could not believe that such a good man would be denied entrance to Heaven while any rogue could get in on the strength of a death-bed repentance; and she began to doubt, and finally rejected the God of the Calvinists. "I could not bend the knee nor open my lips to pray to a Being Whose character, to my blinded eyes, was so veiled in darkness and gloom," she wrote afterwards. Later she wrote a book refuting the Calvinist ideal. Later still Harriet wrote a novel, *The Minister's Wooing*, based on her sister's tragedy, in which she also attacked the Puritan faith.

All that lay in the future. An immediate consequence was that under Alexander Fisher's will Catharine inherited all his

worldly goods, and these included his private library. The books arrived at Litchfield, and Dr Beecher went through them and found Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. He read it and enjoyed it so much that he withdrew the ban on novels and told all the children that they must read *Ivanhoe* too. No one was happier about this than Harriet.

Catharine also inherited two thousand dollars, and that was enough for her to open a school of her own. She went to Hartford, thirty miles from Litchfield, and the Hartford Female Academy opened with fifteen pupils. Mary Beecher, the second girl, went to help with the teaching; Harriet, now thirteen, went as a pupil.

Meanwhile she had been 'converted,' as a result of one of her father's sermons. "Most of Father's sermons were as unintelligible to me as if he had spoken in Choctaw," she wrote later; but this time, "forgetting all his hair-splitting distinctions and dialectic subtleties, he spoke in direct, simple, and tender language of the great love of Christ and his care for the soul." His text was "I call you not servants; . . . but I have called you friends," and this affected Harriet far more deeply than all the familiar threats of hell-fire and damnation. She saw the light. Dr Beecher was delighted. Catharine, who no longer wanted conversion herself, did not believe it was genuine.

Harriet stayed with Mrs Bull, the wife of a wholesale druggist, while she was at Hartford, and was well looked after. At school she was treated like the other pupils, except that Catharine got her an outside tutor in French and Italian; for she expected Harriet to join the teaching staff eventually, and it would be an advantage to extend the curriculum. Harriet was also learning Latin, and, as she had an extraordinary memory, she made rapid progress. In her spare time she began to write a tragedy in blank verse. Catharine caught her at it, and told her to stop wasting her time, and gave her Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion* to read instead. Then, when she was still only fourteen, Harriet had to take the class in that work, "being compelled to master each chapter

just ahead of the class I was teaching." Her pupils were about her own age.

On her father's advice Harriet joined the First Congregational Church in Hartford. When she first applied to the pastor he seemed as sceptical as Catharine about her conversion. He asked her two questions.

"Do you feel that if the universe should be destroyed you could be happy with God alone?" was the first.

"Yes, sir," said Harriet fearfully.

"You realize, I trust, in some measure at least," he went on, "the deceitfulness of your heart, and that in punishment for your sins God might justly leave you to make yourself as miserable as you have made yourself sinful?"

"Yes, sir," said Harriet, and the interview was at an end. The pastor was well pleased with himself for having turned her thoughts to her own wickedness, and Harriet's vision of Christ as a friend vanished. The pastor had been so successful that for the next seven or eight years she suffered periods of great depression and misery, and even thought of suicide, as she contemplated her sins. "I wish I could die young and let the remembrance of me and my faults perish in the grave, rather than live, a trouble to everyone," she wrote when she was fifteen. "How perfectly wretched I often feel—so useless, so weak, so destitute of all energy!"

Meanwhile the school was prospering. Catharine was an excellent teacher with original ideas about the education of girls, and soon she had over a hundred pupils. Harriet finished her studies and joined the staff as English teacher. She was now eighteen, and it looked as if she would remain a teacher for the rest of her life. She was not pretty, and no young man had shown the slightest interest in her. She had little charm, and found great difficulty in making friends. She was shy, talked little, and listened a lot; in company she was, as she admitted, always "shrinking into a corner to notice how other people behave." But she had at least one good friend—another teacher at the school, Mary Dutton—and this friendship lasted for years.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

From the painting by Chappel

Photo "Picture Post"

CHARLOTTE BRONTË
After George Richmond

The rest of the Beechers had left Litchfield by now. Dr Beecher, the most famous preacher in America, had looked for a better-paid position and found one at the new Hanover Street Church in Boston. He was fifty when he moved there with his family, and began by launching a temperance crusade. As a matter of fact, there was a good deal of liquor under the pulpit, for the church society had rented the basement to a wine-merchant. Both pulpit and basement were destroyed when the church caught fire. When the firemen saw the blue flames of burning rum they regarded it as a joke and sang mocking songs about Dr Beecher—whom they considered an extreme Puritan—and refused to pump. The church was burnt down, and Dr Beecher at once set about getting another one built.

But Dr Beecher had arranged to leave Boston before the building was finished. A new opportunity was given to him, bigger and more exciting than anything before: it was to take the true Gospel to the West. A new seat of learning, called the Lane Theological Seminary, was being built in Cincinnati, Ohio. The trustees invited Dr Beecher to be President. As soon as he could leave Boston he accepted, and set off to fight the "Catholics and infidels" for the souls of the people of the West.

He took his whole family with him, including Catharine and Harriet. His sons were going to share in the work of preaching and converting; Catharine would found a college for girls in Cincinnati, with Harriet as her chief assistant. They travelled by stagecoach and steam-boat, and reached Cincinnati in November 1832. Harriet was now twenty-one.

Cincinnati was proud of its capture of the most famous preacher in America, and the Beechers were given a great welcome. Most Congregationalists treated Dr Beecher with awe and even reverence, although a few 'Old School' Calvinists thought him a heretic and secretly plotted against him. His sons and daughters shared in his fame, and Catharine was already celebrated as a teacher on her own merits; so when she announced that she was going to open a girl's

school in Cincinnati money was quickly put up and forty pupils were registered at once. Catharine persuaded Mary Dutton to come and join the teaching staff. Other plans were made for Harriet, who had begun a literary career.

Her first book was called *A New Geography for Children.* Harriet wrote it herself, but Catharine signed it as co-author so that it would have the benefit of her reputation behind it. At that time it was an unusual text-book, written as a continuous narrative instead of the usual series of facts and figures and names; and it showed Harriet's natural gift for writing for children. It quickly became a best-seller, and 100,000 copies were sold in the first two years. Most of the profit belonged to the publishers, who bought the copyright from the authors. Harriet's share was 187 dollars.

Yet even before it was published the family decided that Harriet should spend all her time writing text-books instead of teaching in the school. But nothing came of this plan, and when the school opened Harriet was on the teaching staff. She did not publish any more schoolbooks, but caught much of her sister's interest in the practical side of education, especially in the education of girls for teaching. At twenty-two Harriet seemed a confirmed old maid and likely to remain a school-ma'am for the rest of her life.

In the first summer vacation Mary Dutton and Harriet paid a visit to Kentucky, and Harriet had her first sight of slaves working on the plantations. She showed little interest in them and apparently did not think seriously about their plight. In her letters home she wrote mostly about the prospects for higher education for girls of her own colour. Yet much of what she saw remained in her memory until she found a use for it when she was writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*

She was not thinking of writing for publication then, but shortly afterwards she won a prize of fifty dollars in a magazine story competition. She did not intend to enter—she hated criticism so much that she would not risk having her feelings hurt by rejection—and had not written the story when the competition was due to be closed. But she was now

a member of the Semi-Colon Club, the leading literary society in Cincinnati, and she wrote a sketch for the club about her Uncle Lot. She submitted it anonymously, and it was read at a Club meeting; among those who heard it was the owner and editor of the magazine that was running the story competition. He managed to find out the name of the author, persuaded Harriet to expand the sketch into a story, extended the closing date of his competition on the grounds that all the entries were disappointing, and finally published "Uncle Lot," and awarded Harriet the prize. She took the fifty dollars and went on teaching, although her family and friends were now convinced she was a literary genius. In her spare time she continued to write sketches and essays for the Semi-Colon Club, but does not seem to have made any serious effort to become a professional writer.

Meanwhile her father was having trouble at the Lane Theological Seminary. It began with the arrival of a new divinity student named Dwight Weld. He was thirty, and already a famous lecturer; and his favourite subject was slavery. He had just been converted to the cause of Abolition. He brought many other young converts to the Seminary, and set to work to make more. It was all part of a carefully planned scheme to turn the Lane Theological Seminary into a centre of the Abolition Movement.

Dr Beecher was not an Abolitionist. He was opposed to slavery, but thought that it would be a mistake to abolish it suddenly. He supported a plan for gradual emancipation, called Colonization. So did most liberal citizens in America at that time, in the West as well as the East. Cincinnati, like New York and Boston, hoped for a peaceful transition rather than an abrupt break, and Abolitionists were generally regarded as hot-headed extremists.

"Boys, you are right in your view but impracticable in your measures," Dr Beecher told Weld and his supporters. "Mining and quiet strategy are better as well as safer methods of taking a city than to do it by storm. You are right, but in your way you can't succeed." The students called for a

vote, and a resolution for the immediate abolition of slavery was carried unanimously. Then they formed themselves into the Lane Seminary Anti-Slavery Society, opened a free school for coloured people, and visited their homes and mixed with them socially.

Cincinnati was horrified, especially when the students walked about the streets with young Negresses as well as Negroes. Insults were flung at them, and tempers rose still higher when a group of young Negresses hired a carriage and drove to the Seminary for a picnic with the students in the grounds. Dr Beecher warned the students that they were heading for trouble, and showed his disapproval by preaching a sermon in favour of Colonization. But he was confident that his "boys" would eventually calm down. "If we and our friends do not amplify the evil by too much alarm, impatience, and attempt at regulation," he said, "the evil will subside and pass away." When the Seminary closed for the next summer vacation he thought the worst was over, and set off on a tour of the Eastern States to raise funds. He expected that "the evil" would have gone when the next term began.

He was absolutely wrong. With the president out of the way, and no classes to attend, Weld and his fellow-students increased their activity, and organized another picnic for young Negresses in the Seminary grounds. The public was more indignant than ever, and a committee of trustees resolved to abolish the Lane Seminary Anti-Slavery Society and to forbid the discussion of slavery "in any public room of the Seminary." This provoked more trouble, and Dr Beecher hurried back to Cincinnati to try to make peace. He was angry with the trustees for taking such action in his absence, and forced them to climb down. But the damage was done. A new college was being opened at Oberlin, Ohio, on such progressive lines that women as well as men were to be admitted as students. An Abolitionist was appointed president, and a theological department was opened for students "irrespective of colour." Weld and his followers

walked out of Cincinnati and enrolled at Oberlin, and the Lane Seminary was suddenly emptied. It did not recover in Dr Beecher's time, and all his great hopes and ambitions were destroyed.

Unfairly branded "a pro-slavery institution," the Lane Seminary struggled on. So, for a time, did Catharine's school, although that also was doomed to failure. But it lasted long enough for Harriet to finish her career as a teacher, for at twenty-four she fell in love and married. Her husband was Calvin Stowe, a professor at the Seminary: a widower nine years older than herself, a popular man who could tell a good story and crack a joke, a fat, bald, lazy, greedy man, a weak-willed man and an utter coward. There is no doubt that she loved him all their married life.

During the next fifteen years Harriet bore seven children, lived in poverty—for the Seminary was nearly bankrupt and could not pay her husband's salary in full—and wrote a few sketches and tales. During this period the Abolition Movement steadily gained strength, and the Beechers gradually came to support it. Harriet, who had shared her father's belief in Colonization and who still opposed Abolition in her early married life, moved with the others. Finally her feelings became so strong that she resolved to help her favourite brother, Henry, in his crusade against slavery. So she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* She was then in her fortieth year. When it was published many people thought Henry had written it and put it out under her name. She said Henry had nothing to do with it, but admitted that she was not the true author. "The Lord Himself wrote it. I was but an instrument in His hand."

5

THE BRONTË SISTERS

HAWORTH PARSONAGE has become a shrine, and, as usual, misguided reverence has obscured the facts. Those trees in the garden touch everything with beauty, as trees nearly always do; but they were not there when the Brontës were alive. Nor was the sleek, well-tended lawn, which would be more suitable for a public park. The flashy wrought-iron sign outside the house is another unlucky addition. To see the parsonage as it was when the Brontës lived there you have to try to imagine it without the improvements made by their admirers.

The village, on the other hand, has changed surprisingly little, in spite of the general change in living conditions and the inevitable commercialization. The moors have not changed at all. They are as they were when Emily described them in *Wuthering Heights*—"in winter nothing more dreary, in summer nothing more divine." Widely travelled visitors may find this an exaggeration, for the moors have little obvious beauty until the heather comes out at the end of the summer; but they were almost all Emily knew of the world.

None of the Brontës was born at Haworth Parsonage, and their father was an Irishman. He was born Patrick Brunty, or Prunty, and changed his name when he was at Cambridge University. He thought it might help him in the world, and probably chose it because Lord Nelson had recently been made Duke of Bronte. A market-town in Sicily, Bronte was given to Nelson by Ferdinand IV of Naples, and an Irishman's ambition and vanity accidentally made its name immortal in English literature.

He was poor as a boy, and a half-starved undergraduate,

kept alive by scholarships and the fees he earned by coaching his fellow-students. At twenty-nine he took his B.A. degree and was ordained to a curacy in Essex. There he nearly married a girl named Mary Burder, but jilted her because he thought he would be able to do better for himself. At thirty-five, when he was a curate at Hartshead, Yorkshire, he married Maria Branwell, who came from Cornwall. They had six children in rapid succession, and then moved to Haworth in 1820.

Maria, the eldest of the children, was then six, and her sister Elizabeth was about eighteen months younger. Charlotte was born less than a year after Elizabeth—on April 21, 1816. She was followed within just over a year by Patrick Branwell, the only boy. Emily was born a year later, on July 30, 1818. Anne, the youngest was born on January 17, 1820, and was only a few weeks old when the family moved to Haworth.

The parsonage was—and is—a grey stone house at the top of the village, flanked by a graveyard on two sides: a bleak house, barely furnished, with a stone staircase and no carpets or curtains. There was only one window and no fireplace in the room that was called the children's study, where the Brontë sisters worked and played and shared their dreams.

The first biography of Charlotte was written shortly after her death by Mrs Gaskell. She was asked to write it by Charlotte's father. Mrs Gaskell did not return the compliment with any flattery, but portrayed him as stern, selfish, quick-tempered, eccentric, and tyrannical. After her book was published he denied some of the anecdotes but did not dispute the general picture. He congratulated Mrs Gaskell on her vigour, truthfulness, and delicacy. "I do not deny that I am somewhat eccentric," he wrote in a letter to her. "I am not in the least offended at your telling me that I have faults; I have many," he admitted, showing that he had at least one virtue.

The popular pastime of identifying characters in novels with their supposed originals has been played with the Brontë

sisters' stories, and Charlotte's father has been seen in the character of Mr Helstone in her novel *Shirley*. No doubt there is something of him there, but "you are not to suppose any of the characters in *Shirley* intended as literal portrayals," Charlotte wrote privately to her best friend. "It would not suit the needs of art nor of my own feelings to write in that style. We can only suffer reality to suggest, never to dictate."

Certainly Mr Brontë ruled the household, but so did almost all fathers in those days. Not only his needs but also his comfort were the first considerations in all domestic affairs. Charlotte was not allowed to marry—at the age of thirty-eight—until her father was satisfied that he would not be put to any inconvenience. That was normal in nineteenth-century England, when the head of the house was lord and master of every one else under the same roof. Mr Brontë's selfishness took a different form and was mostly unconscious.

As a young man he was ambitious, vain, and proud of his intellect. He never lost this pride, although as he grew older it was affected by a sense of failure. He published two books of verse, probably at his own expense, and some sermon-like essays; they attracted no notice, and deserved none. He was a good scholar but a poor writer. That did not stop him from spending most of his time in his study on intellectual activities.

As the village parson he carried out his duties correctly and conscientiously, visiting the sick and answering all calls that were made; but he never went beyond that. He was unsociable, a bad mixer because he preferred not to mix. He paid few social calls and did not encourage visitors, and kept his family and himself aloof from village life. He was not a popular parson.

In his own home he kept himself aloof from his own children. When he was not in his study he went for long walks on the moors alone. Mrs Gaskell probably exaggerated his hot temper and eccentricities, although it seems he certainly had a disconcerting habit of firing a pistol out of the window or back door—he had a taste for military matters, and might

have made a better soldier than parson. It is true also that he had a dread of fire, and would not let anyone in the family wear cotton or linen clothes in case they caught alight. But the most unlovable thing about him was his lack of love for his children. He did not force them to live on vegetables, as Mrs Gaskell said, nor did he deprive them of comfort for the sake of making them hardy; he was poor and used to a simple, Spartan way of living himself, and merely imposed the same way on his family. He was not unkind; but he was not kind, he was not affectionate, he was not a father who could love.

He loved his wife. He loved her passionately and tenderly, and it broke his heart to see her slowly dying of cancer, in terrible pain. Her illness began soon after they moved to Haworth, and she died eighteen months later.

Maria, the eldest child, was still only seven, and in spite of his grief Mr Brontë decided he would have to marry again. Three months later he wrote to Mary Burder, the girl he had nearly married before but jilted because he thought he could do better. It was fifteen years since he had seen her, and he said he was delighted to know that she was still single as he was now a widower with "a small but sweet little family." He added that if he had ever given her any pain he only wanted the opportunity to make amends. It was an extraordinarily naïve letter, and Mary Burder took great pleasure in putting him in his place. She said she had to thank Providence for saving her from marriage with "one whom I cannot think was altogether clear of duplicity" and that she was very happy to be single and had no intention of changing her state. She noted that he was now without a wife and his six children without a mother, but reminded him with sardonic piety that "the Lord can supply all your and their need."

This maliciously spirited reply was a blow to his vanity as well as his hopes, and he gave up the idea of a second marriage. Instead, he asked his sister-in-law, Miss Branwell, who had come up from Cornwall, to stay and look after the children. She agreed and took charge of the household, and

Mr Brontë returned to his study with relief. "Aunt Branwell" disliked Yorkshire and was terrified of catching cold, but she stayed and proved an efficient housekeeper. She was not affectionate, and did not inspire any love in the children. They were now left very much on their own, for their father even took his meals alone in his study. He did this apparently because of a digestive complaint. He always believed his health was poor, although in fact he was the only really healthy person in the family. He survived all his children and lived to eighty-four.

The children were not unhappy on their own. There were enough of them to make up for the absence of friends, and they were all so intelligent and imaginative that they were not discontented or bored. They had the resources to amuse themselves and one another without external aids. If they did not love Aunt Branwell they were not conscious of neglect; and, although it may seem strange, their creative talents probably developed better under her than they would if their loving mother had lived. Aunt Branwell laid down household rules that had to be obeyed but did not interfere with or even inquire into their private lives. Like their father, she left them alone, and so they had far more mental freedom than was normally allowed to children. They made full use of it. They soon learned to read, and, as there were no children's books in the house, they raided their father's well-stocked library. Maria, the cleverest as well as the eldest, was reading the newspapers when she was seven and telling the others the news. When they were not reading they made up and acted plays and argued about famous characters in history. Their father did not ignore them completely, but perceived when they were still very young that his children were exceptionally gifted. He decided that the girls deserved a better education than Aunt Branwell could give them. He undertook to teach his son himself, and sent the four elder girls to a school for the daughters of poor clergymen that had recently been opened at Cowan Bridge. The fees were low enough to be within his means.

They went to Cowan Bridge in 1824. Maria was ten, Elizabeth nine, Charlotte eight, and Emily not yet seven. Anne, aged five, stayed at home. She was lucky. There is a full and harrowing description of Cowan Bridge School, disguised as Lowood, in *Jane Eyre*. Before she died Charlotte assured Mrs Gaskell that every word of it was true to life; and true to death too, for the "little martyr" Helen Burns suffered the fate of Maria.

The school was run by the Rev. Carus Wilson, a well-meaning sadist who believed it was God's will that children should suffer and enjoyed making sure that they did. Similarly devout disciplinarians exist to-day, but they are given less freedom to put their views into practice. At Cowan Bridge the children suffered greatly, partly from Mr Wilson's discipline and also because of wretched food, lack of sanitation, and cold and damp. Of the four Brontë sisters who went there only two survived. After ten months Charlotte and Emily came back to Haworth for good. By then Maria and Elizabeth were dead.

For the next five years the Brontë children had little formal education. Their father continued to teach Branwell Latin and Greek, and the girls learnt sewing and household management in their aunt's bedroom. As she spent most of the day as well as the night there, Charlotte in particular needed to know something about running a house. Although only nine, and not much more than a year older than her brother, she was already becoming acting-assistant housekeeper. Her father still took his meals alone and spent most of his time in his study, and the children were left mainly on their own.

However, there was the servant—Tabitha, or "Tabby"; a practical woman, uneducated but full of sense, who scolded them and spoiled them and gave them more affection than they had known since their mother died. She was their only link with the outside world until Branwell, defying his father's orders, began to play with the boys in the village. But he still spent most of his time with his sisters, and the

four together created a world of their own: a secret world of shared daydreams.

It began when their father gave Branwell a box of twelve wooden soldiers. They played with them together, and gave each soldier a name and a character. They made them fight battles, and then invented other adventures for them; and in this way they developed a whole saga of plays. Other children have played similar games, and still do; but what made the Brontës exceptional was that out of their play-sagas they produced a whole literature. They wrote literally millions of words in tiny notebooks, filling them with stories, novels, histories, dramas, poems, and sketches. They continued to do this, with some interruptions, for about sixteen years: in fact, almost until they began to write the novels that made them famous.

Charlotte and Branwell, being the eldest, played the main part both in inventing plays and adventures and in creating the literature that grew out of them. Charlotte wrote most of all, and her output was so great that at some periods she must have spent nearly all her time writing. None of this early Brontë literature is worth publishing for its merits, and it is readable only to those who are keenly interested in the authors' characters and development; yet here and there in Charlotte's long, straggling, artificial romances there are fragments of observation and imagination that seem now to be advance evidence of the literary genius she was to show later. Of course such evidence is not very reliable, for it is too keenly sought.

For five years the Brontë children lived in their own fantasy-world. Then Charlotte, now nearly fifteen, was suddenly sent away to school again, presumably so that she could equip herself to take up some genteel occupation. She was now nearly a woman, and it was not easy for her to become a schoolgirl again. But the school at Roe Head, some twenty miles from Haworth, was very different from Cowan Bridge, and Miss Wooler, who ran it, had nothing in common with the Rev. Carus Wilson. There were rarely more

than ten pupils, and the education was limited, but the girls were treated with kindness and humanity.

Naturally Charlotte was ignorant for her age in some subjects, but in others—especially English literature—she was far in advance. She learnt quickly and worked hard and with a purpose, for she was preparing for the future. Her father earned only £200 a year, and when he died his children would have to live on what they could earn themselves. Branwell, who was then regarded as the genius of the family, might have a brilliant career ahead: for the girls the only prospects were marriage or becoming teachers or governesses, as these were the only 'respectable' jobs they could hope to be able to do. Charlotte was already planning a career as a governess. Her chances of marriage seemed small, for she had no dowry and was physically unattractive. She was short and thin and plain, with irregular features including a crooked mouth and a large nose. Her only good feature was her eyes, which were beautiful. Unfortunately they were not very efficient.

She could not play games at Roe Head because she was so short-sighted. Probably this was not the only reason, though: she was so anxious to learn that she usually studied privately while the other girls chattered or played. Yet she was not unpopular. She made two good friends—Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey—and they remained her friends for the rest of her life. The other girls discovered and appreciated her ability as a story-teller, and she used to hold the dormitory spellbound after lights-out with highly imaginative tales. Some of these were thrillers, and one of the listening girls once screamed out almost in hysterics. Miss Wooler investigated and fined all the girls who had been talking, and that was the only time Charlotte was punished while she was at Roe Hill.

She stayed there eighteen months, which was as long as her father could afford. She rose to the head of her class and then to the head of the school without much difficulty, for the competition was slight. The other girls all had richer parents

and were not looking forward to living and dying in genteel poverty. They could afford to enjoy themselves. Charlotte evidently envied them, for on her last day at Roe Hill she said to Ellen Nussey, "I should for once like to feel *out and out* a schoolgirl; I wish something would happen! Let us run round the fruit garden; perhaps we shall meet someone, or we may have a fine for trespass." They ran round the fruit-garden, but nothing happened, and Charlotte left the school and became a woman.

During Charlotte's absence from the parsonage Emily, now fourteen, and Anne, eighteen months younger, had begun a play-saga of their own. Branwell, at fifteen, continued writing by himself, in sudden bursts; but he also mixed more with other boys, joined a local boxing-club, and spent a good deal of time drinking in the village pub. When Charlotte came back he did not change his ways, but spent more time at home; and their literary collaboration was resumed.

They were no longer children, but they still lived in their dream world of fantastic plays. It was more secret than ever now, and Charlotte would not speak of it even to her friend Ellen Nussey, whom she visited shortly after her return home. The visit was returned, and Ellen went walking with the Brontë girls on the moors. Charlotte especially belonged a little more to the outside world.

At home Charlotte's responsibilities had greatly increased. Her aunt complained that her health was worse and stayed more and more in her room. Her father also thought he was very ill, and now went to bed regularly at nine o'clock. On his way he told his children not to be late, and no doubt they obeyed him. Charlotte not only kept house but became the family schoolmistress. She was ambitious for herself and her sisters, and, although their prospects were bleak, she was determined they should not fail for lack of effort. She wanted to pass on all she had learnt at Roe Hill, and kept Emily and Anne working harder than they liked.

At Roe Hill Charlotte had shown a natural talent for drawing, and she persuaded her father to engage a drawing-master.

Neither Emily nor Anne showed any great ability, but Branwell developed genuine talent, and it was thought that he might have a career as a portrait painter. Charlotte had hoped that she and her sisters might earn a living in the same way, but their lack of ability and her own bad eyesight made this impossible.

A music master also visited the parsonage, and again Branwell showed exceptional talent. He learnt the organ and composed music for the flute, and it was thought he might even have a musical career. Emily played the piano quite well, and Anne sang and played prettily. Charlotte alone had no gift for music. The one thing they all had in common was their love of writing.

Branwell was good at everything he touched, and they thought he might become famous in any of the arts. He was also the most attractive and charming. Naturally sociable, sometimes arrogant and always conceited, he was a fluent talker and popular in any company. He outshone his sisters to an extent that could not be entirely due to social differences in that age between boys and girls.

According to all accounts, the Brontë girls inspired feelings of pity rather than anything else. They were dressed in old-fashioned clothes, two of them were plain, and all were silent in front of strangers. Charlotte and Anne were both painfully shy. Emily also was reserved, but in a different way —a less attractive way, according to Mrs Gaskell, who obviously disapproved of her; she did not blush and stammer prettily like Anne, but was aloof and withdrawn because she wanted to be. Anne was the only pretty one, and apparently the least complicated in character; but a study of her writings, and the facts that are known about her, show that she was by no means as uncomplicated as she appeared.

An immense number of books have been written on the Brontës, and all kinds of theories have been built up about their individual characters, especially those of Charlotte and Emily. These theories are not mere speculation, nor are they based only on analyses of their novels. There is a great mass

of valuable material about the Brontës, much of it indisputably authentic. The difficulty is partly that there are big gaps and also that it is complicated; for they were indeed complex characters.

Charlotte, shy and awkward and looking a bit like an old woman, was slightly bitter and indignant that other girls should have better chances in life and yet not make use of them. She was also passionate, although strangers did not know this. The Brontë girls had been brought up to conceal their emotions, and in that age it was not thought proper for a woman to love. She was expected to allow herself to be loved if she was lucky enough to achieve that state. *Jane Eyre* is labelled Victorian now, but it shocked many Victorians because of the shameless and brazen way in which the heroine insisted on her right to the same feelings as a man. "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? . . . I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart . . . it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are!" The idea of equal rights for women in love was outrageous in the man-dominated, 'Father-knows-best' society of that age, and it was not accepted till long after Charlotte's death. A comparison of Jane Eyre with any of the cardboard heroines created by Dickens, who began writing much later, shows how far ahead Charlotte was of the social mood of her times.

Emily is harder to understand than Charlotte, for her writing was less obviously subjective. It is no wonder that her character remains enigmatic, for *Wuthering Heights* is probably the most extraordinary novel in the English language. In her 'teens it seems that she was abrupt with strangers and devoted especially to Anne. She loved freedom and independence, and found them most at the parsonage; which is not so surprising as it may seem. She loved the moors, and was more relaxed and less withdrawn when she went out on them with the others. But she also liked walking on the moors alone.

ANNE BRONTË

After a pencil drawing by her sister Charlotte

Photo "Picture Post"

JENNY LIND, THE SWEDISH NIGHTINGALE

After E. Magnus

The four Brontës stayed together at Haworth for three years after Charlotte left Roe Head. Then they separated. Branwell went to London, to study at the Royal Academy. This took all their father's available money, and, as Branwell was a boy and had the best prospects, they all agreed it was right that it should be spent on him. Charlotte went out to work—not as a governess, but as a teacher at Roe Head, under Miss Wooler. Her wages were enough for Emily to go to the same school as a pupil. Anne, who was still only fifteen, remained at home.

Almost everything went wrong. Branwell went to London, but never even took the entrance examination of the Royal Academy. Emily could not bear the constraint at Roe Head, and pined for the moors and became so ill that she had to return home. Charlotte became discontented and morbid: she had no flair for teaching—none of the Brontë girls cared for young children—and she felt frustrated by the pettiness and monotony of her work. She took refuge in her daydream world, and wrote about the play-sagas to Branwell, who had now returned home and was writing again. He was also drinking more, and had in fact started on the way down that was to lead to his early death.

Anne took Emily's place at Roe Hill. Charlotte was glad to have her, but did not see much of her; and before long Anne fell ill. In the end she also had to go back to Haworth, and Charlotte was left alone. Her mental state declined, and this affected her physically, until at last a doctor told her she ought to leave for the sake of her health. She was delighted to be given a reason strong enough to outweigh her sense of duty, and in 1838 she returned to Haworth. She was now twenty-two. Emily was twenty, and Anne not yet eighteen. Branwell, who was twenty-one, had tried drawing and painting again, and then made an effort to write for publication. His manuscripts were all rejected, and when he wrote to Wordsworth he did not get an answer. Charlotte followed his example and sent some of her poems to Southey, who replied with a kindly letter, acknowledging that she had

talent but warning her against daydreaming and gently discouraging her. She was not discouraged, but decided to go out as a governess.

Before she went she had an offer of marriage. It came from Henry Nussey, Ellen's brother, who was a clergyman. She liked him, but refused. "You do not know me," she told him. "I am not the serious, grave, cool-headed individual you suppose; you would think me romantic and eccentric." She told Ellen that, although she liked Henry, she "could not have that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and, if ever I marry, it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband." Soon afterwards she received another proposal, which she also turned down. She reduced her chances of marrying to almost nothing by refusing to marry anyone except for love. Rather than that she would go out as a governess, much as she hated the thought.

It was agreed that Emily would stay at home and take over the housekeeping. After leaving Roe Head she herself had tried teaching at another school, but after six months she had returned in such a state that it became impossible for her to take another post of that kind. Anne decided she would go out as a governess, against the wishes of the others, and, in fact, she went first. Charlotte found a post soon after, and hated the life even more than teaching at Miss Wooler's school. No doubt she was unsuited to the job of looking after small children, but it is equally certain that she was badly treated by her employers. They were not exceptional. Governesses then were both exploited and despised. They had to swallow their pride and stifle their intelligence, and neither Charlotte nor Anne was able to do either. For Emily it would have been utterly impossible.

Branwell had now taken a job as a railway booking-clerk, and all hopes of an artistic career for him had vanished. Besides drinking heavily he took opium, which was then a popular—and, indeed, almost respectable—drug. Later he had an affair with a married woman, and lost the affection

and respect of his sisters. Their father now had a curate, who flirted with the girls when they were at home, sending them Valentines and brightening up their lives more than they admitted.

In 1841 the sisters decided to try to run a small school on their own at the parsonage, where at least they would be free and independent. Some capital was needed, and Aunt Branwell agreed to provide it. The sisters had few qualifications, and Charlotte wondered how they could get more, when she had a letter from her friend Mary Taylor. Mary was then at a finishing school in Brussels, run by a man named Heger and his wife. She wrote to Charlotte of the wonders of Brussels, and Charlotte decided that she ought to go there too, with at least one of her sisters. She thought Emily, the most intelligent, would benefit more than Anne. She asked Aunt Branwell to lend them enough money to spend six months as pupils at the school, carefully explaining why this was necessary. She did not add that the reason was also an excuse, or that the idea of going abroad and seeing a big city had become her greatest desire.

Aunt Branwell agreed, and Charlotte and Emily went to the school. Charlotte was nearly twenty-six, and Emily nearly twenty-four. "At this ripe time of life," Charlotte wrote to Ellen Nussey, "I am a schoolgirl, a complete schoolgirl, and on the whole very happy in that capacity. It felt very strange at first to submit to authority instead of exercising it—to obey orders instead of giving them; but I like that state of things."

The other pupils did not like her or her sister. They were mostly Belgians and Roman Catholics, and at first they regarded the two young Englishwomen with curiosity. Unfortunately both Charlotte and Emily were intolerant of Catholics and had all the prejudices of provincialism. They did not like the Belgian girls' 'foreign' ways and had as little as possible to do with them. Emily simply refused to speak to them at all.

But they worked hard, and at the end of their six months

Heger offered to keep them on as teachers, giving them their board but no pay. Charlotte had hoped that they would be able to stay on the Continent getting teaching experience, and the offer was accepted. But after a few months Aunt Branwell died, and they both returned home. She had left them some money, and the plan for the school was not affected. But Charlotte went back to Heger's school to teach for another year, leaving Emily at Haworth. Anne was still working as a governess in a private family.

Charlotte was unhappy at Brussels without Emily, and, to make matters worse, she fell in love with Heger himself. Nothing was said, but his wife guessed and made Charlotte miserable. Finally she went back to Haworth, and at last the plan for the school was put into operation. Prospectuses were printed, and letters sent out; and friends were asked to help.

Not one pupil was enrolled. There was not even a single letter of inquiry. The great plan was a complete failure.

Aunt Branwell's small legacies helped to tide the sisters over for the time being, but their future now looked bleak. Their father was going blind. His curate had died, and a new one had come, an Irishman named Nicholls: "he appears a respectable young man," wrote Charlotte, "and I hope will give satisfaction." (Nine years later, when she was thirty-eight, she married him; not because she loved him, but because he loved her and she felt sorry for him.) Branwell was in debt and disgrace. Anne had at last given up her post as governess, so that the three sisters—no longer girls, and apparently on the way to becoming old maids—were together again. Their plan for a school had failed, and none of them wanted to go out teaching or as governess again. But what else could they do? They had to start earning some money again soon.

Then Charlotte discovered some poems that Emily had written and put away in a desk. Emily had written them secretly and not meant Charlotte to see them. Charlotte read them and thought they were extraordinarily good and ought to be published. She told Emily, who was annoyed with

Charlotte for finding and reading the poems and at first refused to agree to publication. Her poems were part of her daydream life, and too private. Meanwhile Anne intervened by showing Charlotte some of her own poems. Charlotte thought these also had merit, although not as much as Emily's. At this time one of Anne's poems had been printed in *Chamber's Journal*—the only literary success of the four Brontës so far. Charlotte had not thought her own poems worth publishing, but she now thought of publishing a book containing poems by all three.

For some time Emily resisted the idea, but in the end she gave way; and the poems were published under the names of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Charlotte explained afterwards that they did not want to admit they were women—"we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice"—but that their consciences would not allow them to pretend they were men, so they chose Christian names that were neither male nor female. Publication was absolutely secret. They did not tell their father or brother or any of their friends. They had to pay the cost of publication, which was thirty guineas.

The book was published in 1846. It was mainly ignored by reviewers, and after twelve months exactly two copies had been sold.

Meanwhile they had each begun work on a novel, and the failure of their poems did not put them off. Charlotte finished hers first, and began sending the manuscript to publishers, under the pseudonym of Currer Bell. She made it clear that she was not prepared to pay for publication, and asked for it to be considered on its merits. This novel—*The Professor*—was rejected by one publisher after another. Still not disheartened, Charlotte began work on another.

Now Emily and Anne finished their novels, and their manuscripts also went the rounds. After many rejections both were accepted by the firm of J. C. Newby on condition that the authors bore part of the expense. They agreed. The same firm had rejected *The Professor* even on these terms,

and Charlotte did not offer them her second novel. She sent it first to the firm of Smith and Elder, who had also rejected *The Professor* but had written the author a kind and encouraging letter in which they asked her to submit any further novels she might write. The firm's reader was so impressed by the new novel that he asked the head of the firm, George Smith, to take the manuscript home with him for the week-end. Smith read it at one sitting, breaking a social engagement and sitting up into the night to finish it. He accepted it at once, without asking Charlotte to pay any part of the cost.

Charlotte's novel was published before her sisters'—in October 1847. It was *Jane Eyre*, and the author's name according to the title-page was Currer Bell. In December of the same year Messrs. J. C. Newby published *Wuthering Heights*, by "Ellis Bell," and *Agnes Grey*, by "Acton Bell." The Brontë sisters' literary career had begun. But it was already nearly over, and for two of them the end was very close.

Emily died a year after *Wuthering Heights* was published, at the age of thirty. Anne survived her by less than six months, dying at twenty-nine. She published one other novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.* Charlotte went on living and writing alone for another five years, during which she wrote *Shirley* and *Villette.* Then she married her father's curate, and died nine months later, a few weeks before her fortieth birthday. Branwell had already died, even before Emily. The father of these remarkable children lived six years after Charlotte. He was the last of the Brontës.

6

JENNY LIND

JENNY LIND—the "Swedish nightingale," as they called her—was more than a great singer, and the music of her voice has survived, although she lived before the age of the gramophone. She inspired Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and other composers, and her singing was in Mendelssohn's mind when he wrote his oratorio *Elijah.*

She was born in Stockholm on October 6, 1820, and baptized Johanna Maria. Her father was only twenty-two, and he was a pleasant, easy-going, lazy young man. He did as little work as possible, and never had much money; but he was kind-hearted, and that was more than could be said of his wife. She was five years older than he was; and she was capable, energetic, ambitious, and hard. While her husband earned a small wage as a part-time clerk—he called himself an accountant—she was the main bread-winner, and it was her energy and thrift that kept the household going.

Jenny's father had one great talent: he could sing. He never made any money out of it, but he was prominent in local musical festivities; and sometimes at home he sang Swedish ballads while his wife accompanied him on the guitar. But during most of Jenny's childhood he did not live at home. Nor did Jenny, for the first four years of her life. Her mother ran a girls' school, and took in a few boarders. She already had a daughter by a previous marriage, called Amalia, who was nine when Jenny was born. She had no time to look after a baby, so Jenny was put out to nurse with the wife of the organist and parish clerk of Ed-Sollentuna, a village about fifteen miles outside Stockholm.

It has been said—as it was bound to be said—that it was in the village organist's home that Jenny acquired both her

love of music and her love of nature. She said nothing of the kind herself, and no doubt she would have become just as good a singer if her nurse had been married to a pork-butcher and lived in a slum. Her earliest recollection was of a fanfare that buglers used to blow when soldiers marched past the Lind's home in Stockholm. She returned there when she was four, and soon afterwards gave the first sign of musical ability.

She thought she was alone in the house one day, and went up to the attic where an old spinet was kept. Amalia and her mother's pupils used to practise on this. Jenny had never had a lesson, but without much trouble she picked out the notes of the fanfare on the instrument.

As it happened she was not alone. Her grandmother was at home, and when she heard the spinet being played she thought it was Amalia and called out to her. Jenny had to confess that she had been playing, and her grandmother was greatly impressed. "Mark my words, this child will bring you help," she told Jenny's mother afterwards.

Jenny was frightened of her mother, who was harsh and strict, narrow and suspicious. Sometimes she made a great show of affection, but her moods changed without warning, and Jenny never knew what to expect. Her grandmother was different. She was always kind, and Jenny loved her dearly. She was very unhappy when her grandmother left to enter a Home for Widows. Still, she was allowed to play the spinet, and neighbours called in to listen to her playing.

Meanwhile the school was not prospering. The last boarder left, and then Jenny's mother closed down and accepted a job as governess outside Stockholm. She took Amalia with her, and put Jenny in the care of the wife of the warden of the Widows' Home. Jenny was then eight.

She was very happy at the Widows' Home. She was the only child there, and was made a great fuss of; every one was kind to her, and that was a pleasant change from being nagged and scolded. She was glad to be away from her mother—and especially happy to be able to spend so much

time with her grandmother. She was left alone quite a lot, for the warden's wife worked during the day; but she did not mind, and sang to the cat, which had a blue ribbon round its neck. She never forgot this cat.

She was always singing. "I sang with every step I took and with every jump my feet made." When it was fine she sat by the open window in her room, and the cat lay in the sun while Jenny sang to it. No doubt the cat slept, but Jenny had a larger audience than she knew. The window looked out on a busy street, and passers-by stopped to listen to the singing from above. Those who could appreciate singing marvelled at the beauty of this immature, untrained voice.

One of the passers-by was the maid of Miss Lundberg, a dancer at the Royal Opera House. She could appreciate singing, and she was so impressed that she told her mistress about it. Miss Lundberg then sent a message to Jenny's mother asking if she could hear the girl sing.

Jenny's mother was doubtful. The Linds' religion was strict and puritanical, and in their eyes professional dancers were immoral. Still, she eventually took Jenny to Miss Lundberg, and Jenny sang.

"The child is a genius," said Miss Lundberg. "You must have her trained for the stage."

The stage? Jenny's mother was shocked. She thought of theatres as the houses of the devil. Miss Lundberg might as well have suggested sending Jenny to Hell. She could not consider committing her daughter to a life of sin.

"Then at any rate you must have her taught singing," said Miss Lundberg. She gave Jenny's mother a letter of introduction to Croelius, the Court Secretary and Singing Master at the Royal Theatre, in the Opera House. She pointed out that the theatre had a separate singing school, quite apart from the dramatic section, and there was surely nothing wicked in having a beautiful voice trained.

Jenny's mother's resistance to the idea was probably due less to religious convictions than to fear of loss of respectability. In the end she decided that there might be no harm in

taking Jenny to see the Court Secretary; so they went to the Opera House. There Jenny sang to Croelius, who was so impressed that he at once took her to the Director of the Royal Theatre, Count Puke. He did not like the look of her. "I was a small, ugly, broad-nosed, shy, *gauche*, under-grown girl," Jenny said later. She also had big feet.

"How old is she?" asked Count Puke.

"Nine," Croelius told him.

"Nine! But this is not a nursery—it is the King's Theatre."

Croelius turned to Jenny's mother.

"If the Count will not hear her," he said, "I will train her myself, free of charge, and one day she will astonish you."

This offer seems to have astonished Count Puke, who grudgingly agreed to hear Jenny sing. When he heard her he forgot about her youth and lack of beauty, and Jenny was offered a place as an "actress-pupil" at the Royal Theatre. This meant that she would be taught dancing and elocution as well as singing, and there was no question of her being separated from the stage.

Jenny's grandmother was asked for her opinion. She was a genuinely religious woman, devout and sincere in her belief; but she loved Jenny, wanted her to be happy, and had great faith in her character. "God will look after her," she said. Jenny's mother then overcame her own scruples and considered the terms of the offer.

Under these the Royal Theatre promised that Jenny would be fed, boarded, clothed, and educated at the expense of the Government. She would not live at the theatre, but would be boarded out in a private home in Stockholm, like the other actress-pupils. Jenny's mother said that she had run a boarding-school for girls, and suggested she might take not only her own daughter but some of the other pupils too. The Directors of the Royal Theatre agreed to this, and a contract was drawn up. Under this, Jenny's mother had to promise to teach the girls "the piano, religion, French, history, geography, writing, arithmetic, and drawing" and to give them

"a tender mother's care." The contract was signed, and Jenny left the Widows' Home and lived with her mother again. Three or four other actress-pupils joined her there. Jenny entered the Royal Theatre a few days before her tenth birthday.

She was the youngest of the actress-pupils, but got on well with the others. At the theatre school they came under the charge of a superintendent, Miss Bayard, and Jenny liked her too. She made good progress, and in spite of her big feet she learnt to dance quite well. Her piano-playing was hindered by an injury to her left hand, the result of an accident when striking fire with a flint on tinder. She never fully regained the use of her muscles. Still, she managed to play well enough to accompany herself when singing and also to play solo, and she loved improvizing.

Jenny had been at the Royal Theatre only two months when she made her first public appearance on the stage. She was given a part in a play, and had to dance and act. Most of her early appearances were in straight plays, for she was too young to be given singing parts. Croelius nursed her voice, and his successor as her singing master, Albert Berg, was equally careful. He had as much faith in her as Croelius. He did not want her to sing in public at all yet, but the Royal Theatre could not afford to keep its best actress-pupils in cold storage. Jenny had to sing in concerts, and her voice soon attracted attention. When she was not quite twelve a Stockholm newspaper critic reported that her "remarkable gift" had caused quite a sensation. "Every one is astonished and moved by her singing," the critic said. After praising Berg for the way he had trained her he added a note of warning: "If this young genius does not ripen too prematurely there is every reason to think she will become an operatic artist of the first rank." But that, he said, was in the distant future; and it depended on her not being brought on too fast. Berg did his best to save her voice, and she helped by making herself useful to the theatre as an actress. "She shows in her acting a quick perception, a fire and feeling beyond her

years," reported one dramatic critic, "which seem to denote an uncommon disposition for the theatre."

Her mother had raised no further objections to Jenny's acting, which had brought her more money than she had had for a long time. Unfortunately she did not know how to look after her good fortune. In the home she was still moody, sometimes affectionate but more often harsh and unreasonable. Jenny was not a difficult child, but she had a difficult mother. The other girls who boarded with her thought so too, and they complained about it at the theatre. The Directors concluded that they were not getting the "tender mother's care" stipulated in the contract, and took them away. They were then quartered in some rooms at the top of the theatre under the care of Miss Bayard. The Directors could not take Jenny away, but when she was fourteen she decided she had had enough. She ran away from home and asked Miss Bayard to look after her too.

Her mother was furious. She ordered Jenny to return, and when the girl refused she asked the Directors to send her back home. The Directors also refused; so she started legal proceedings, persuading her husband to take her side. The case dragged on for nearly two years before a Court decision was made in her favour. Then Jenny had to go home.

They had been two happy years for her, and she was sorry to leave her friends and Miss Bayard. But her mother was more reasonable for a time, and her home-life was almost normal.

She was sixteen, and she now made her début in opera. She was given a part in a new work by Adolf Lindblad, the most famous song-writer in Sweden at the time. It was the only opera he ever wrote, and it had a bad Press. Twenty-four years later, when the pianoforte score was published, he sent a copy to Jenny with the words "not even your singing could save it." Curiously the opera was revived in the same year, and was quite a success—without Jenny's singing.

After her debut Jenny was given a regular engagement at the Opera House with a salary of about £60 a year and a

bonus for each performance. Her first professional appearance was in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, and she was coached for the part by a singer named Mrs Erikson. Jenny worked hard, and during one lesson, when she thought she had sung quite well, she was disappointed when her teacher remained completely silent after she had stopped. "Am I then so stupid and incompetent?" she asked herself. Then she saw that Mrs Erikson was crying, and when she had wiped her eyes she could only say, "My child, I have no more to teach you. Do as Nature tells you."

Der Freischütz was performed on March 7, 1838, and throughout the rest of her life Jenny kept this date as her second birthday. "I got up that morning one creature, and I went to bed another creature," she said later; "for I had found my vocation." Stockholm had found that it possessed a great new singer. Her reception was tremendous; the audience stamped and cheered, calling her back again and again, and even the musicians put down their instruments to join in the applause.

Berg was still trying to save her voice, and luckily she acted well enough to appear in straight plays as well as operas. But her singing was so great an attraction that her employers insisted on her being given other operatic roles, and during the same year she also gave her first concert.

Meanwhile her mother had become difficult again, and for the second time Jenny ran away from home. With some foresight she went to stay with her Aunt Lona. She guessed her mother would be unable to obtain a Court order for a daughter of nineteen to leave the house of a near relation, and it proved to be a good guess. Eventually her mother became more reasonable again—she always did when she was defied—and she gave Jenny permission to move into the home of Adolf Lindblad and his wife Sophie, who treated Jenny as both a daughter and a friend. She stayed with the Lindblads until she left Stockholm.

In 1840 Jenny appeared only in opera, and her fame increased. She was made a member of the Swedish Academy

of Music and appointed a Court Singer to the King, and before the season was over she was the idol of Stockholm. It was taken for granted that she would be re-engaged by the Royal Theatre for the following year; but Jenny had other ideas.

At the age of twenty she was a famous singer—in Sweden. Outside her own country she was unknown. Her singing master, Berg, was considered the best teacher in Stockholm, and he had taught her all he could. Belletti, the Italian baritone with whom she was singing, told her she could learn more if she went to Paris and studied under the Spanish teacher Manuel Garcia. Adolf Lindblad had the same opinion. As a teacher Garcia was considered to have no equal in Europe.

Jenny made up her mind, and wrote and told the Directors. She said she would return to Stockholm when she had finished studying under Garcia, and hoped they would still want her then. It was a brave decision, for it meant not only giving up the footlights and becoming a pupil again but taking the risk of being forgotten or superseded by some other singer. What was more important was that Garcia was known to charge high fees, and she had little money of her own.

She decided she would have to earn more, and between two opera seasons she made a musical tour of Sweden. Her father travelled with her. In December 1840 the Royal Theatre made another attempt to keep her, offering her a three-year engagement at £150 a year, with an annual benefit and a bonus for each performance—the highest fee it was allowed to pay. But she had made up her mind, and in July 1841 she left for Paris. She was not yet twenty-one, and had never before been out of Sweden.

When she reached Paris she found that Garcia was indeed an important teacher, and he chose his pupils as he wished. She had her letters of recommendation, and he had heard of her successes in Stockholm; but he would not commit himself to accepting her until he had given her an audition. It

went badly. He listened in silence while she sang scales, made no comment, and then asked her to sing one of her favourite arias. She began—and broke down. Garcia brought the audition to an end.

"It would be useless for me to try to teach you," he said bluntly. "You have no voice left."

It was the simple truth. She had sung too much when she was too young, and in her struggle to raise funds she had exhausted her voice.

But she would not let him reject her without a struggle. She pleaded until at last he agreed to give her another test in six weeks' time. During that period, he said, she must not sing a note. She must not even talk any more than she could help. And he added that even if she rested her voice completely he doubted if it would recover sufficiently.

Jenny obeyed his orders, spending her time studying the theory of music and improving her French. She was more confident than Garcia. She went back after six weeks, and had another audition and, still doubtful, he agreed to accept her. He warned her she would have to be very careful. She was to have only two lessons a week, and only a limited amount of practice.

"I have to begin again from the beginning," she wrote in a letter; "to sing scales, up and down, slowly, and with great care; then to practise the shake—awfully slowly; and to try to get rid of the hoarseness, if possible. Moreover, he is very particular about the breathing."

He was very particular indeed, and outspoken about her faults. He told her she had no idea of voice production, and that his first task was to get her out of her bad breathing habits. "You have very much to unlearn," he said. She realized then that Berg's teaching had not been so good as she had believed. Berg happened to be visiting Paris at the time, and in order not to risk hurting his feelings Jenny delayed starting her lessons with Garcia until he had gone. She felt no less gratitude to Berg than before, and never afterwards uttered a word of criticism or reproach. Jenny

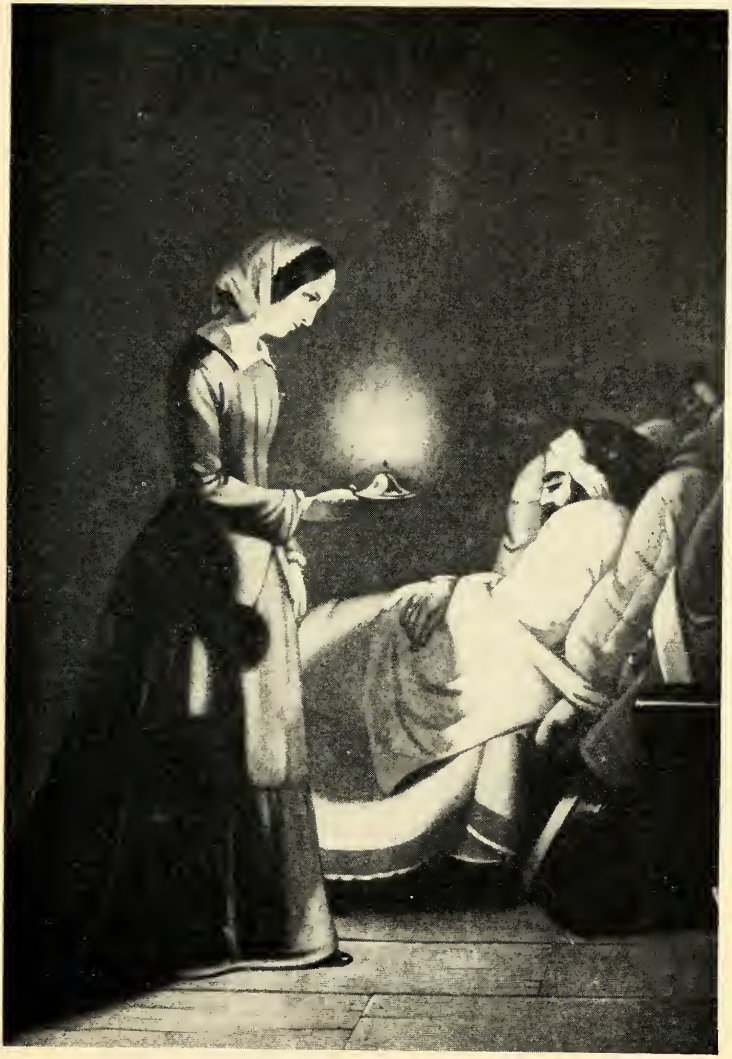
Lind had a sweet nature as well as a sweet voice, and she never deliberately hurt anyone in her life. No one ever heard her say an unkind word about her mother, who had given her less kindness than any daughter deserved.

Of course she had faults. She was narrow-minded and inclined to be priggish, and she disapproved of Paris. "To my mind its worst feature is its dreadful selfishness, its greed for money," she wrote in a letter. That was not quite frank; what she disliked about it most was its lack of interest in Jenny Lind. In Stockholm she had been treated like a princess, almost a queen; in Paris she was nobody. No one had heard her sing, and no one was interested in her singing; and apart from her voice she had nothing that was likely to make Paris notice her.

Garcia nursed her voice back, and she knew she had not come to Paris for nothing. He taught her to breathe properly, and developed her technique, until she sang more beautifully than she had ever sung before. But still he insisted that she must be careful not to use her voice too much.

After a while Garcia introduced her to another of his pupils, a German girl of her own age named Henrietta Nissen. She already had some reputation in Europe, and she was one of Garcia's favourite pupils. Jenny liked her, and the German girl liked Jenny; and, although they were rivals, they became good friends. Henrietta's voice was good, but not as good as Jenny's; but she had other advantages. She was prettier and had more charm and grace, and she could afford better clothes. Paris was more interested in Henrietta than in Jenny.

Henrietta had been studying under Garcia for two years, and eventually he arranged a party for her. Important and influential men in the world of music were invited, and it was a gay and splendid affair. Jenny was invited too, and wore her best dress (which was not very good). She was not asked to sing, and nobody took any notice of her. Henrietta sang and was praised and flattered, and she was given a three-year engagement in Italy at a salary more than double the



THE LADY WITH THE LAMP

After Butterworth

Photo "Picture Post"

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL

By kind permission of the Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine

highest offer Jenny had received from the Royal Theatre at Stockholm. Jenny tried not to be jealous, and nearly succeeded.

She hoped to be able to sing at least once in public in Paris, but nobody wanted to hear her sing. She had no influential friends and did not know how to make any. After studying under Garcia for ten months she had improved her singing immensely but made no further progress in her career. She wrote to the Lindblads and said she was thinking of returning home. Sophia Lindblad wrote back and urged her to try to sing in Paris first.

"I dare not tell you how I long for home," Jenny wrote in her next letter. "I dare not tell you how far from happy I feel here. But there is one thing in your letter which frightens me. You say that if I come back without having appeared here in public, they will say that I was not fit for Paris, however well I sing. Ho, ho! What will happen then? It might perhaps be better to engage myself as a nursemaid, for it is a very difficult thing to appear here in public. On the stage it would be out of the question; and in the concert room I am at my weakest point. What is wanted here is admirers. Were I inclined to receive them, all would be smooth sailing. But there I say—'Stop!' "

It was true that Jenny needed admirers to get on in Paris, but she was never in a position to turn any away. Her voice was her only attraction, and that was never heard. She was a plain girl—she admitted that no one was likely to fall in love with her "potato nose"; and she had none of the charm or elegance that Paris loved. She had not been brought up for drawing-room society. She was not witty or sophisticated, she had no brilliant conversation, and she lacked self-assurance and poise.

Jenny now wrote to the Directors of the Royal Theatre, said she hoped she had not been forgotten, and offered her services again. The Directors quickly relieved her fears, and proposed a fresh engagement on much the same terms as they had offered before she left—a salary of £150 a year with

annual benefits and a bonus for each performance. She disputed some of the details, demanding higher bonuses than they proposed—she was not entirely naïve about money—and then accepted the revised terms. Adolf Lindblad paid a visit to Paris at this time, and saw Jenny. "She has engaged herself at too small a salary," he wrote to his wife. "This she now regrets but it cannot be helped. Her love for Sweden and the kind letter of the Directors have dimmed her vision."

Then the famous composer Giacomo Meyerbeer came to Paris. Lindblad knew him well, and persuaded him to hear Jenny. Meyerbeer called on her, and she sang; and he was so impressed that he arranged for her to sing to him again in the Grand Opera House when it was not in use. He was quick to appreciate her talent, although doubtful if it would please Paris; but he felt sure that she would be a great success in Berlin. If he had arrived in Paris a month or so earlier and heard Jenny then, she probably would not have accepted the offer from Stockholm.

But she was happy to go back, and happier still when she reappeared in opera in her home-town and was praised more highly than ever before. Both the critics and the public were amazed by the improvement in her voice. She had been called a nightingale before she went to Paris, but her singing then had been nothing compared with what it was now. Her success was assured when her admirers included the Queen.

That success did not make her rich. She earned nothing beyond what she was paid by her employers. Still, she had enough to be able to buy a house in the country for her parents, and relieve her mother of the financial worry she had suffered ever since her marriage.

When she returned to Stockholm Jenny naturally stayed in the Lindblads' home, but her relations with them were no longer the same. Adolf Lindblad, although twenty years older, was beginning to fall in love with her. His wife was quick to sense it, and was deeply hurt. Jenny felt herself falling in love with Adolf, and the situation became impossible.

She left quickly, but not quite quickly enough. They did not part friends as she had hoped, and it was not till some years afterwards that the breach was repaired.

Soon afterwards Jenny went abroad again, and appeared in opera first in Finland and then in Denmark. In Copenhagen the students serenaded her, and Hans Andersen fell in love with her. She loved his stories and liked the man and wanted his friendship; but she did not want his love, and when the "ugly duckling" became too pressing she was cruel enough to hand him a looking-glass.

Meanwhile Meyerbeer was writing a new opera, called *A Camp in Silicia*, and he wrote the part of the heroine, Vielka, for Jenny. The opera was to be performed first in Berlin, and he asked Jenny to play the part. She went to Dresden to improve her German, and Meyerbeer prepared for the performance in Berlin. Then Jenny suddenly had to go back to Sweden to take part in the celebrations for the coronation of King Oscar. Meyerbeer feared she would not be able to return to Germany in time for the first performance of his opera, and in a panic he asked another singer, Leopoldine Tuczec, to rehearse the part of Vielka.

Jenny knew nothing of this. She was able to reach Berlin in time, and Meyerbeer was delighted; but Leopoldine Tuczec was furious when she was told she was not to play the part. She was the resident *prima donna* in Berlin, and she said she had been promised the part. She told Meyerbeer she would take the matter up with the authorities and fight for her rights. Meyerbeer brought the two women together, and hoped that Jenny would fight for the part. Instead she immediately renounced all claim to it. "As I am not fond of strife and understand nothing of intrigue," she wrote in a letter, "I ceded my place with pleasure—the more willingly because I was convinced that Miss Tuczec was right, since she had had the part for some time and was, moreover, a great favourite with the public here, while I am quite unknown and a foreigner also." Meyerbeer was annoyed and thought she had let him down, but asked her to take part in

another opera that was to be put on shortly afterwards, and she agreed.

Leopoldine Tuczec appeared as Vielka in the first performance of *A Camp in Silicia*, and was not a success. That was not her fault: the part had been written for Jenny's voice, and hers was not of the same kind. When Jenny herself sang for the first time in Berlin the critics and public were delighted. Soon she took over the part of Vielka, and then Meyerbeer's new opera was widely praised.

For the first time the "Swedish nightingale" became really famous outside her own country, and soon she was invited to sing at the Court of the Princess of Prussia (later the Empress Augusta). Among the guests was Lady Westmorland, the wife of the British Ambassador, and she found listening to Jenny Lind the most extraordinary experience of her life. When she returned home the same evening her husband asked, "Well, what do you think of Meyerbeer's wonder?"

"She is simply an angel," said Lady Westmorland.

"Is she so very handsome?"

"I saw a plain girl when I went in," his wife told him, "but when she began to sing, her face simply and literally shone like that of an angel. I never *saw* anything or *heard* anything the least like it."

7

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

FLORENCE was not a girl's name until it was given to Florence Nightingale, and she only got it because her mother wanted to be smart. She was luckier than her elder sister, who was born in Naples, in 1819, and christened Parthenope, after the Greek name for her birthplace. Her mother cared nothing for Greek, but liked to be thought original; originality of this kind was fashionable at the time, and Fanny Nightingale was very much a lady of fashion. She did the same thing when her second child was born, on May 12, 1820, at Florence; and so a new Christian name was born, and no doubt it would have died with its holder if she had not become famous.

The girls were not called by their outlandish names. Parthenope was shortened to Parthe, or more commonly to Pop. Florence was called Flo.

Their parents were very rich. Their mother was beautiful and gay, extravagant and pleasure-loving, and her ambition was to be a fashionable society hostess. Their father—W.E.N., as he was always called—was more interested in philosophy than society, and his favourite pleasures were reading and thinking. His natural home, he often said, was in "the quiet and shadows" of his library. As his wife flourished in the chatter and bright lights of the drawing-room, they were not well matched. But he was in love with her, and she thought she could make him into the sort of husband she wanted.

It was her idea to return to England, a year after Flo's birth. They had been abroad since their marriage, three years earlier, and W.E.N. would have been content to idle in Italy for the rest of his life. He was by nature an indolent man.

Architecture was one of his hobbies, and he designed a new house, which was built on his family estate in Derbyshire. Lea Hurst, as it was called, stood on high ground, and the view was magnificent; but it was very cold, and the first winter there both the children caught bronchitis. It was also unsuitable for entertaining on Fanny's scale. For one thing it was too small. "Why, it has only fifteen bedrooms," Flo pointed out at a dinner-party twenty years later.

They kept Lea Hurst for summers, and W.E.N. bought a larger and more suitable house for the rest of the year. This was Embley Park, in Hampshire, on the borders of the New Forest, and they moved in when Flo was five. Fanny wanted a house in London as well, but W.E.N. would not agree to that. Still, they went to London regularly in the spring and autumn seasons. They also visited relations in other parts of the country. The girls had many uncles and aunts on both sides, and many cousins of about their own age. Sometimes they went with them to the Isle of Wight, where they bathed and sailed. At Embley they played and rode, and Flo grew up a good horsewoman.

The Nightingales had no more children, but the uncles and aunts did, and by the time Flo was fourteen she had twenty-seven first cousins. Long before then she had gained a reputation for being good with babies. There were usually some at Embley, and if Flo was away she ended her letters home by asking her parents to "kiss all the babies for me." She also had a pet donkey and a pet pony, and pet cats and dogs as well as favourite dolls, and inevitably legends arose later about how she nursed her pets when she was a child. Once, it is said, Pop broke one of her doll's limbs, and Flo bandaged it. Another story is about a shepherd's collie, named Cap, that was found by Flo and the village parson after it had been stoned by some boys. The shepherd thought it would have to be destroyed, but Flo and the parson took care of it, and she put hot fomentations on its injured leg. The dog recovered, and that has been called Flo's first success in nursing. Victorians loved sentimental stories of this sort and gave

them more weight than they deserved. They were not above making them up, either. There is no reason to think that Flo felt any call to nursing when she was a child.

She had to do some nursing as she grew older, though, for in those days most home nursing was done by relations. There was a good deal to be done, too, for women especially were continually falling ill. This was expected of them in those days, and fashion dictated that Fanny Nightingale and her daughters should all be delicate. It is hard to believe they were, for Fanny lived to be ninety-two, Flo ninety, and Pop seventy-five. Nothing is known of Flo's ability in home nursing apart from a remark made by Pop, after being her patient, that "she was a shocking nurse." There is no reason to believe this, for it was part of a spiteful letter that Pop wrote when she was burnt up with jealousy and envy.

They never loved each other, although Pop showed much of the possessiveness that is sometimes mistaken for love. This outlived their childhood, and caused Pop to have a mental breakdown, with delusions and delirium, when she was in her thirties. The doctor, who was a Court physician, told Flo to separate herself from Pop to save her from going mad. "A very successful and justly successful physician once seriously told a sister who was being Devoured that she must leave home in order that the Devourer might recover health and balance which had been lost in the process of devouring. This person was myself."

When they were still children Pop wanted to dominate Flo and demanded all her affection, and no doubt that made it harder for Flo to feel any for her. In any case the "lady with the lamp" was not a naturally affectionate person. In middle age she wrote unfeelingly that Pop had "always been the spoilt child," apparently without considering how far Pop's failings arose from her sense of inferiority. For Pop, the elder, was also the plainer, the less intelligent, and the less charming to adults. On her own she was quite a pretty and pleasant girl, but beside Flo she seemed colourless. Adults are not always tactful in front of children—they

commonly forget that even young boys and girls have understandings and feelings; sometimes they forget they have ears —and it did no good to Pop to hear her younger sister praised lavishly for her beauty and wit and charm.

It did Flo no good either, although it probably did her no harm. She was already an extraordinarily unhappy child. When she was very young indeed she had an obsession that she was unlike every one else, almost unnatural; and that, although no one else knew it yet, she might be found out at any moment. Strangers were especially dangerous, and she hid from them in terror; and it was best not to be seen by anyone, in case she betrayed herself. "My greatest ambition was not to be remarked. I was always in mortal fear of doing something unlike other people." She even refused to dine downstairs, because she feared she would give herself away by doing something fantastic with her knife and fork.

She blamed herself for the cause of her fear, and terror was joined by guilt. She could not confide in anyone, but kept her feelings bottled up. The world was intolerable to her, and she sought to escape from it in the usual way of the unhappy child by daydreams. She told herself stories in which she was always the heroine, and in her flight from reality she spent hours at a time in this private dream world.

But reality can never be escaped, and she was a lonely as well as a frightened little girl. She did not want to be noticed —but she wanted to be loved. While she was generally unfeeling, she attached herself passionately to particular persons. The first of these persons was one of her governesses, Sara Christie.

Miss Christie began badly. She greeted Flo with the words "Good morning, my dear." Flo was suspicious—how could she be dear to this woman when they had never even met before?—but later she relaxed. She began to think she was really dear to Miss Christie, and Miss Christie became the dearest person in the world to her. She was heartbroken when she left.

Flo's second great love was her father's youngest sister,

Aunt Mai. Flo loved her till she was seven, when she was told that Aunt Mai was going to marry Fanny's brother Sam. Flo already disliked Uncle Sam, and now she hated him. She went to the wedding, at Tapton, in Yorkshire, and in the church she tried to kneel between the bride and bridegroom —in order, she confessed afterwards, to keep them apart as long as possible. She was sick with misery after the wedding.

She felt no passionate love for her mother. She was always dutiful—when her mother was old she carried duty to excess —but as a child she obeyed rather than loved. This can be seen very clearly from her letters. When she wrote to her aunts and other relations, even to her father, she was natural and relaxed; she prattled on, heedless of spelling, never thinking about saying the right thing. But when she wrote to her mother she was formal, stilted, on guard; her letters were correct, free from gossip, full of promises to be a good girl, and very short.

Neither her mother nor anyone else seems to have suspected that Flo was other than a normal, happy girl. On the surface there was nothing wrong. It was true that she and Pop quarrelled a good deal, but they could be expected to grow out of that. Flo played with the other children, enjoyed her riding, and learnt her lessons well. At first Pop was the quicker, but Flo soon overtook her. She was especially good at French. She began to learn this from a French maid, Agathe, and at eight she started to write her autobiography in that language. It was entitled *La Vie de Florence Rossignol,* and she went on adding to it until she was ten. She meant to keep it up all her life, but gave it up for lack of time. She may also have tired of writing of her surface life when it was so different underneath. This work of hers, crowded with accounts and incidents and of meetings with other people, tells nothing at all about Florence Nightingale. But parts at least of her real story were being written elsewhere.

Throughout her life, from childhood to old age, Florence Nightingale kept what she called her "private notes." She sometimes kept diaries too, but these were less private. The

private notes, which were written on odd scraps of paper but carefully preserved, were her confessions, the uncensored outpourings of her mind. Many of these notes have survived, and that is why we can often know for certain exactly what she felt and thought.

Flo's early terrors subsided, and gave way to discontent. When she was only six, she said later, the apparently pleasant life at Embley was utterly distasteful to her. She gave no sign of this when she and Pop went with their governess on walks in the hills to gather lilies of the valley and other flowers; or when they made little bags which they sold to earn money to spend on the poor children of the village. Flo noted that she once earned 1*s.* 2½*d.* in this way. She was always exact about figures.

Charity was a normal part of life at Embley. Fanny was generous, and W.E.N. was philanthropic; and the girls were expected to help to organize parties and give away presents and prizes to the villagers, and to visit the aged and the sick. If the Nightingales were rich they were also good to the poor. W.E.N. was an unusually generous landlord, and he spent large sums in support of a free school near Lea Hurst. That, at least, could not have been any help to him in his public life in Hampshire, where he had entered local politics. He was High Sheriff for Hampshire when Flo was nine, and was beginning to think of standing for Parliament. Fanny was his keenest supporter, for if he was elected she would have her house in London and achieve her social ambitions. Meanwhile she had at least turned him into an English country gentleman. He hunted, shot, and fished. He also educated his daughters.

Miss Christie was succeeded by other governesses, all of an unusually high standard; but they were not good enough for W.E.N.—or for Flo. He let them begin the girls' education, and go on teaching them music and drawing. He himself taught them ancient and modern languages and history and philosophy. He was thorough and exacting, and it was too much for Pop. She let her younger sister go ahead on her

own. He taught Flo Italian. "He was never pedantic, never a tiresome grammarian," she wrote afterwards. "He spoke Italian like an Italian, and I took care of the verbs." He taught her Greek and Latin, well enough for her to converse in Latin with abbots and monks whom she met later on the Continent when they had no other common language. And when she was sixteen she was reading Homer.

By then she and Pop had drifted apart. "Pray, dear Pop, let us love each other better than we have done. It is the will of God, and Mamma particularly desires it." She had written that when she was ten, but Mamma's desire was never fulfilled. When Flo was twelve she and Pop agreed to get up early every morning to teach the nursery maid, Bessie, to read and write. They began together, but it could not last. Pop lost interest, and Flo carried on by herself. Pop had neither stamina nor the ability to concentrate, and, because Flo was better at learning than she was, she scoffed at learning altogether. She left her books and found consolation in the drawing-room with her mother.

That became the normal division in the family. Pop sought gaiety and was her mother's girl. Flo found companionship in her father, and he was delighted to have some one intelligent to talk to. Pop was still possessive and jealous, and Flo made it worse by becoming priggish and talking about improving her mind. Pop complained to her father, and Flo told him Pop was irresponsible and could not be judged by ordinary standards. "I sometimes fancy that you and I have not made half as much of each other's society as we might have done," he wrote to Pop, and then reproved her for her faults.

When Flo was fifteen he stood for Parliament.

He stood as a Whig. "How I hate Tories, all Beer and Money!" he had written to Fanny five years before. Since then the Reform Bill had been passed, to his great delight, for he had refused to enter politics until it became law. One of its aims had been to end the purchase of votes, and the new Election was the first to be held in his constituency

under the new franchise. He expected the new voters to vote for the party of reform.

But the new voters, like the old voters, were not going to give their votes for nothing. A vote had always had a cash value, and extending the franchise merely made bribery more extensive. W.E.N. refused to bribe, and so he lost the seat. Realizing that Parliament was no place for an honest man, he gave up politics in disgust. He also gave up hunting, and slipped out of the role of country gentleman that his wife had worked so hard to create. He spent more time in the library, and more time with Flo.

Fanny knew she would never have a London house now, but she did not have to give up her social ambitions. She still had two assets, and they were now approaching their maximum value: Pop and Flo were seventeen and sixteen, and nearly ready to make their début, or 'come out.' They had to be launched in style, and there would have to be more lavish entertainment. Embley was too small, so Embley had to be extended. It needed at least six more bedrooms.

W.E.N. agreed, and began to draw up new designs. The work was bound to take a long time, and Fanny said it would be cheaper if they all spent the time abroad. A European tour would also 'finish' the girls and make them fitter for presentation at Court. Again W.E.N. agreed. He loved travelling, and looked forward to meeting old friends in France and Italy.

Meanwhile Flo received a personal call from God. She recorded the event in one of her private notes: "On February 7, 1837, God spoke to me and called me to His service." Like Joan of Arc's saints, God spoke to her in a human voice, although in a different language; and she heard the voice three more times in her life, in moments of crisis. But the Call was not like Joan's, for she was not yet given any specific mission. That did not worry her. She took it for granted that God would tell her what He wanted her to do when He was ready to use her service. Meanwhile she felt happy and secure for the first time in her life. She had a faith and a future.

They left England in September of the same year, with a

huge carriage of W.E.N.'s own design, drawn by six horses. Flo kept a diary of the tour. At Chartres she was enchanted by the beauty of the cathedral in the moonlight. At Nice she was delighted by the parties and balls. She forgot the Call and even the beauties of cathedrals, and fell in love with dancing. At the grandest ball of the season she danced every quadrille. They only stayed three weeks at Nice, and she was in tears when they left. But she was cheered up at Genoa, where there were even bigger and better balls; it was, she said, "like an Arabian Nights dream come true." She went to the opera, and saw *Lucrezia Borgia.* It was "so beautiful, so affecting, so enchanting; how could one ever wish for anything else if one were always looking at that?" She became, she said, "music-mad." But she also visited a deaf-and-dumb institution, and her diary and letters were not entirely frivolous. While Pop recorded her impressions in sketches—drawing was the one thing she did better than her sister—Flo wrote down her observations of political and legal systems and especially social conditions. But the song and the dance came first.

From Genoa they went to the city of her birth, which had become the cultural capital of Italy. There were more parties and balls, 'at homes,' and visits to the opera; and Flo persuaded her mother to take her to the opera three times a week. She and Pop also had lessons in singing and playing the piano and drawing; while Pop drew better, Flo had the better voice.

Italy then was neither united nor free. Much of the country was ruled by Austria and occupied by Austrian troops. But Florence, the capital of the Grand-duchy of Tuscany, was free. It was also the centre of the movement for Italian freedom, and W.E.N. and Flo met several of the leading patriots. She supported their aims warmly, and read Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics.* Sismondi himself was living in exile in Geneva, and after touring the Italian lakes the Nightingales went there to see him. Flo at once fell under his spell, and he took her on long mountain walks

and talked to her of Italian history, politics, and economics. She scribbled notes as fast as he talked; he, like W.E.N., was delighted to meet a girl who could ask intelligent questions and understand matters of importance. Balls and even the opera were forgotten now.

Geneva was packed with Italian intellectuals, refugees from Austrian oppression, and W.E.N. was happier than he had ever been hunting foxes in Hampshire. He did not want to leave, but Geneva suddenly became unsafe. Louis Napoleon, future Emperor of France, was there as a political refugee. The French Government demanded his expulsion and return to France. The Swiss Government refused the demand. The French moved up troops, and war seemed inevitable. Barricades were put up in the streets of Geneva, and it was time for the Nightingales to leave.

The crisis was solved without fighting, but by then the Nightingales were in Paris. Fanny had an introduction to the heart of Paris society—the literary *salon* of Miss Mary Clarke. She was half Scottish and half Irish, and yet more French than the French. She did not welcome her own sex. "I can't abide women. Why don't they talk about interesting things? Why don't they use their brains?" she wrote once. The young ones were the worst. "I don't like young ladies." She had no time for Englishwomen. "Of all the creatures God ever created, none does spoil society like an English lady." Flo was young and English and the wrong sex for Miss Clarke, but she overcame all these obstacles. "Clarkey," as they called her, fell in love with all the Nightingales, took them everywhere, and became Flo's closest friend. Flo had another of her passions. She almost forgot her Call until they were about to leave Paris, when she made a private note that God was not likely to want her services if she thought of nothing but her own pleasure. She would not hear from Him again, she concluded, until she had overcome her "desire to shine in society."

The tour had lasted eighteen months. The Nightingales returned to England in April 1839, and just after Flo's nine-

teenth birthday the girls were presented to the Queen. Then followed a hectic round of balls, parties, dinners, and concerts, and the Call was forgotten again. And Flo had another infatuation, the most serious of them all, this time for her beautiful Cousin Marianne. "I never loved but one person with passion in my life," she wrote later, not very accurately, "and that was her." Marianne, who could be mean and heartless, did not love Flo; but her brother Henry did. Flo also could be heartless, and, although she did not love Henry, she encouraged him so that she could become more intimate with Marianne.

Flo also began to tire of the social round, and fell in love with mathematics. This annoyed her mother, who wanted her to make a good marriage and could not see what help mathematics would be. When Flo asked if she could have a teacher, Fanny refused. Flo confided in Aunt Mai, who took her part, and wrote long letters on the subject to her sister-in-law. "I don't think you have any idea of half that is in her," she said in a postscript, and that was true enough. W.E.N. was drawn into the dispute and opposed Flo's wish for different reasons. "Why mathematics? I cannot see that mathematics would do great service. History or philosophy, natural or moral, I should like best." In the end Flo had a few lessons, but mostly she had to teach herself.

Emotionally she probably needed something cold like mathematics at this time. She was now writing long letters to Aunt Mai and her "dearest Clarkey" and "dearest Hilary," a younger cousin for whom she had developed yet another passion. Marianne, the dearest of all, was unkind and made her miserable, and her conscience was troubling her about the way she led Henry on. She was also worried by her enjoyment of social success. "All I do is done to win admiration," she wrote in a private note, and warned herself against the "pride of life." She was now twenty-two, and the Call was five years old.

Then she met Richard Monckton Milnes (later Lord Houghton), a poet and politician who was well known for his

philanthropy. "He treated all his fellow mortals as if they were his brothers and sisters," wrote Flo. He specialized in work for young offenders—juvenile delinquents, in the jargon of to-day. He fell in love with Flo, and she fell in love with his work. She began to ask more questions about how the poor lived. She had read *Oliver Twist*, which was published while the Nightingales were in Europe, and social conditions had worsened since then. England was now in the "hungry forties," when men and women and children starved to death. At Lea Hurst in the summer Flo doled out soup and shillings to the poor of the near-by village of Holloway, but she was beginning to doubt if her father's kind of charity was enough. "My mind is absorbed with the idea of the sufferings of man," she wrote in a private note. "All the people I see are eaten up with care or poverty or disease." In the autumn she asked: "What can an individual do towards lifting the load of suffering from the helpless and miserable?" She could not find an answer.

The following summer she spent much of her time providing for the people of Holloway. She wanted to feed and clothe the whole village, and her mother, although generous herself, thought she was unreasonable. "Perhaps if we got a Sœur de Charité Flo would let us rest in some peace," she wrote to her husband. In the autumn they moved back to Embley, much against Flo's will. She wanted to stay with the hungry and the sick. "It breaks my heart to leave Lea Hurst," she wrote to Aunt Mai.

She was still indulging in day-dreams, making up stories with herself as the heroine. She fought against the habit and lost the battle, and felt like a drug-addict. Meanwhile Henry was getting tired of waiting and wanted her to become engaged to him, and Marianne told her sharply that she ought to make up her mind. She guessed then that when she rejected Henry she would lose Marianne, and that would break her heart. To avoid a decision she became ill.

Aunt Hannah was kind to her. She was a gentle, deeply religious woman, who thought that Flo would be happy if

only she could find union with God. Flo clung to Aunt Hannah and drew strength from her, and began to achieve this union. Aunt Hannah never understood her. She thought, like a nun, that union with God was the end in itself that brought perfect peace. To Flo it was only the preparation for service, the means to an end. And, at last, in the spring of 1844, she discovered her vocation. She was going to help the sick.

She told no one until a well-known American philanthropist, Dr Samuel Grindley Howe, came to Embley in June. He was the director of the first institute for the blind in the United States—the Perkins Institution, in Boston—and his whole life was dedicated to the service of suffering humanity. Flo saw him privately and asked:

"Dr Howe, do you think it would be unsuitable and unbecoming for a young Englishwoman to devote herself to works of charity in hospitals and elsewhere as Catholic sisters do? Do you think it would be a dreadful thing?"

He replied:

"My dear Miss Florence, it would be unusual, and in England whatever is unusual is thought to be unsuitable; but I say to you 'go forward,' if you have a vocation for that way of life, act up to your inspiration and you will find there is never anything unbecoming or unladylike in doing your duty for the good of others. Choose, go on with it, wherever it may lead you, and God be with you."

Flo made up her mind, and wondered how to break it to the family. "I dug after my little plan in silence," she wrote. She remained silent all that summer and the following winter, and the next year Henry proposed and she had to refuse, and she lost Marianne for ever. Her heart was broken, and she nearly had a mental collapse. Then her grandmother was ill, and Flo nursed her. Then the old family nurse was ill, and Flo nursed her too. She persuaded her mother to let her go out and nurse others. Then she proposed to go to Salisbury Infirmary for three months to be trained as a nurse. She told her parents in December 1845.

Her parents were horrified. Her mother accused her of having a secret love-affair with some "low vulgar surgeon": why else should she want to "disgrace herself"? Her father asked if it was for this that he had taught her Latin and Greek. "It was as if I had wanted to be a kitchen-maid," Flo wrote later. It was worse than that.

Hospitals in those days were filthy, wretched places, and the only people who went into them were those who were too poor to be looked after in their own homes. The buildings were squalid and almost devoid of sanitation, and they stank. They were no places for a lady. Nor could a lady nurse strange men and keep her reputation. It was improper for her to be present at a medical examination; for her to witness a surgical operation on a man would be positively obscene.

But there were even more important objections than these. Flo wanted to be a nurse, and nursing was a disreputable occupation. Hospital nurses were notoriously drunken and immoral, and in public esteem they ranked little above prostitutes. Some of them, indeed, carried on both trades.

There was, however, another class of nurses, who called themselves sisters, or Sisters of Charity. They were mostly Catholics, although there were some Protestant institutions with sisters of a similar kind. One of the most famous was at Kaiserswerth, in Germany. Their morals were beyond reproach, but they were not very efficient nurses. "Excellent self-devoted women," Flo described some of them later, "fit more for heaven than a hospital, they flit about like angels without hands among the patients and soothe their souls while they leave their bodies dirty and neglected."

There were not many Sisters of Charity in England, although there were "lady visitors" who went round the hospitals to try to help the patients. They were even less use. They would say a prayer with a patient, but not empty his bed-pan. That was nurses' work. And Flo wanted to be a nurse.

Naturally her parents were horrified, and naturally they refused to allow her to go to Salisbury Infirmary. She was

forbidden to mention her shameful desires again. She was twenty-five, but she had to obey; for she was a woman, and this was still a man's world.

Flo then began a secret study of hospital reports and Blue Books on public health. She also entered a long period of depression, which nearly brought her to mental and physical collapse. "I see nothing desirable but death," she wrote. "The day of personal hopes and fears is over for me, now I dread and desire no more." But she still hoped, and still nursed people privately and sometimes secretly; and, at last, after five years of agony—the word is her own—she visited Kaiserswerth and stayed there a fortnight. "All at once I felt how rich life was," she wrote. She was not trained there, for she soon found that medically the institution was greatly overrated. "The nursing there was nil, the hygiene horrible." But never had she seen "a purer devotion."

Her mother was angry, Pop was hysterical, her father was cold and aloof. But Flo persisted, and got real nursing experience in a Catholic hospital in Paris, where she dressed and lived as a nun. She came back and took charge of a nursing-home in Harley Street for "sick gentlewomen." That was in 1853, when she was thirty-three. The next year the Crimean War broke out, and in the autumn *The Times* revealed that British soldiers were dying in misery in Scutari for lack of medical care. There were not enough surgeons, there was no medical equipment—and there were no nurses. "Why have we no Sisters of Charity?" asked a correspondent of *The Times.*

Flo volunteered to go out there. When she offered her services she emphasized that she was "not a lady but a real hospital nurse."

She went, and became famous, and made nursing a respected occupation; and when she came home she used her fame to reform the medical service of the Army. She also enabled her mother to realize her ambition. Fanny had her social success after all—not as the wife of an M.P., but because she was the mother of a nurse.

8

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL was not the first woman doctor. There were women physicians and surgeons in ancient Egypt, and woman students were admitted to Egyptian medical schools. There were women doctors in ancient Greece and Rome, too, and in Europe in the Middle Ages. In Salerno in the eleventh century—one of the best medical schools in the world at the time—women taught as well as studied, and the department for women's diseases was handed over to them entirely. Women doctors survived the Reformation, and in England under Henry VIII they were given licences to practise in the same way as men.

From time to time attempts were made to rid the profession of women. In 1341 the Pope issued an Edict forbidding women to practise medicine. Exactly two hundred years later the English Guild of Surgeons passed a resolution "that no carpenter, smith, weaver, or woman practise surgery." As the medical profession became better organized it was made more difficult for women to enter it. This was mainly because male doctors expected, reasonably enough, that they would make more money if they did not have women competing with them for fees. Male doctors controlled the medical schools, and in most countries only men were admitted as students. Yet women continued to work as doctors, and in England in the eighteenth century husbands and wives sometimes practised together. There were still English women doctors at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but their opportunities were becoming more limited. Medicine was becoming steadily more scientific, and the need for proper training increased; and more measures were being taken to protect the public from unqualified practitioners. The ques-

tion of decency, as it was called, was another barrier to women. Altogether English doctors had little cause to fear female competition when Elizabeth Blackwell was born.

That was on February 3, 1821—less than a year after the birth of Florence Nightingale. Elizabeth was luckier in her parents. They were not so rich, and eventually they became quite poor; but to achieve her aim she did not have to fight her family as well as the world.

She was born at Counterslip, Bristol, and was the third daughter of Samuel Blackwell, a sugar-refiner. He was a Nonconformist, a member of the Independent Church. He was also something of a rebel. He believed in social reform, the rights of women, and the equality of man. He was a strong supporter of the movement against slavery, and he made plans for the use of beet-sugar in order to make slave labour unnecessary. The anti-slavery movement was an unpopular cause in Bristol, particularly in the sugar trade; but Samuel Blackwell was not an unpopular man, and he was respected even by those who opposed his views.

He also had unusual opinions on bringing up children. He allowed them to be heard as well as seen, and did not share the general view of the age that they should be their parents' chattels and consider themselves lucky to be born. "Children also have their rights," he used to say. He had many children, and they all loved him.

Anna, the eldest, was considered the most intelligent, and when she was ten she said she was going to be a writer. Marion, the second daughter, was not so ambitious and said she was just going to read; Elizabeth, then six years old, was vague but determined. "I don't know what I'll do," she said, "but I think it will be something hard." Each of them fulfilled her aim.

Elizabeth only just survived her birth, and she was a sickly infant. As she grew up she was a shy, quiet little girl, and yet extraordinarily self-willed and stubborn. Outwardly she seemed to have much less spirit than Anna, and yet it was not long before she dominated both her older sisters. Her

independence and obstinate determination were strong when she was still quite small. She insisted on doing things herself, no matter how difficult they were. She would not let anyone help her tie up her boot-laces or do up the buttons on her frocks, and when lessons began she fought with her exercises and would never ask for help. Aunt Barbara—Aunt Bar, they called her—said, not exactly with approval, that she had never seen such determination in a child. Another aunt said it seemed a pity that such spirit should be "wasted" on a girl. Her father disagreed. All human beings had equal rights, he said—rich and poor, whiteskins and blackskins, old and young, men and women, boys and girls. They should all have the same opportunities, and that included the same education.

There were few good schools for boys then, and fewer still for girls; and most of the good schools were Church of England institutions, and did not take the children of Dissenters. Samuel Blackwell therefore had all his children educated at home. At first they had governesses, and then tutors; and boys and girls were taught exactly alike. Elizabeth and her sisters were not packed off to do embroidery but sat with their brothers and learned Latin and Greek, history and mathematics. What was then the novel idea of co-education never seemed out of the way to Elizabeth, for she was brought up on it.

Aunt Bar and the other aunts did not approve, and visitors to the house asked if this schooling for girls was wise. What, they asked, did their father intend they should do with all this masculine education? "They shall do what they please," he said. He did not believe that the only possible career for a woman was marriage.

The family grew rapidly. Elizabeth was followed by three boys and two more girls, and afterwards she said she could scarcely remember a time in her childhood when her mother was not either expecting or nursing a baby. This was a mixed blessing, for it meant that the children came largely under the care of Aunt Bar. She was a strong believer in discipline,

and walked about with a "Black Book" in which she entered their names when they were naughty. Anna afterwards described her as "disagreeable, ill-tempered, strict, narrow-minded, and a dreadful tyrant." But her tyranny was limited, for they were not her children and their parents did not give her a free hand. They knew that discipline was a poor substitute for self-discipline, and it was this they wanted the children to learn.

Not that Elizabeth needed much teaching: when she was only ten she developed a mania for disciplining herself. Her mother, who was deeply religious, told her once about men who had punished themselves to overcome their sins, and she decided to do the same. She had no hair-shirt, but invented other means of making herself uncomfortable, such as sleeping on the floor without any bedclothes. This gave her a bad cold in the head, and, as she hated being ill, she sought other methods. Fasting was one. She began by refusing to eat her favourite dishes, and then went without food altogether for a whole day. This made her feel so bad that she was ill-tempered and gave way to the very faults she had been trying to correct. But she seems to have got some pleasure out of toughening herself up.

She wanted to be tough. She hated even the thought of sickness, and regarded it as a sign of weakness of character. Once she caught a bad fever, which began with a terrible chill. The normal treatment was to put the patient to bed and wrap him up warm, but Elizabeth was not going to be anyone's patient if she could help it. She said nothing to anyone, but paced up and down the passage outside her bedroom, hands clenched, teeth chattering, limbs aching, trying to conquer the fever by sheer will-power. Her mother found her and sent her to bed, and she cried in humiliation.

When the others were ill she had to take her turn at nursing, which she did efficiently but without much sympathy. She gave them their treatment, but had no patience to sit and hear them tell her how ill they were. As she hated being coddled herself, she was not inclined to coddle others.

This was hard on Marion, who was always being ill and liked being coddled. Elizabeth suspected—correctly—that Marion made a lot of fuss, and this made her contemptuous. It also led her on one occasion to give Marion a stiff dose of lobelia when she was supposed to have camomile tea. The aunts said Elizabeth was unfeeling, and in other ways they observed that she behaved more like a boy than a girl. She seemed to have no interest at all in ladylike occupations like sewing and embroidery, and this could only be her father's fault. What was the use of all that Latin and Greek? "Let her grow up to do what she wants," he said. "I'm certain that she's not wasting her time." But even if she became a brilliant scholar—and she was not as bright as Anna, anyway—what use would it be to her? There were no professions open to women—no opportunities for careers. All the more reason for educating them, said their father. They needed education even more than boys, for "they will have to make their own opportunities."

Samuel Blackwell was a Whig and a strong supporter of electoral reform. He was also a good employer and wanted to raise the condition of the working classes. He understood the reasons for their growing unrest, but did not approve of violence in any cause, and he was grieved when a mob in Bristol burnt down the town hall and other buildings and terrorized the city. His family were at their country home at Ovelston, about nine miles away, but he stayed in Bristol. When he heard that the rioters were going to attack the church of St Mary Redcliffe he went to stop them.

The rector had run away. Not one member of the clergy or congregation dared to defend the church. But when the mob reached it they were stopped outside by three men—Samuel Blackwell and two friends, all Dissenters. Blackwell spoke to them, and they listened. It was not his church, he said, but it was a church; and no true reformer would destroy churches. Indeed, he said, the destruction of any property was not in keeping with the spirit of reform.

His own views were well known, and he was popular with

the mob. They called off the attack on the church, and did not destroy any more buildings. The riot was over. Blackwell was the hero of the city, and there was talk of electing him mayor. But he found no joy in his victory, for industrial unrest was increasing all over the country. "Neither side will listen to reason now," he said. He blamed the Tories and yet was tolerant towards them. They repressed the people, he said, "not because they are cruel but because they don't understand better. The heart must be educated." But the struggle became more heartless, and he began to lose his love of England. He talked often with visitors from America, and watched the emigrant ships set out from Bristol. He began to think of taking his family to this "big land with free men and free ideas." Perhaps, he thought—a bit too hopefully—the American sugar-industry would take more kindly to his idea of using sugar-beet and so removing the need for slave labour.

No decision was made until by accident his sugar-refinery caught fire and was gutted in two hours. A group of other refiners offered to lend Blackwell the money to rebuild his business. He talked it over with his wife, and they finally decided to emigrate. They left during 1832, when Elizabeth was eleven. There were sixteen in the party—the parents, the eight children, four maiden aunts, and the family nurse and governess. After a voyage of seven weeks they arrived at New York.

They lived first in the city, and then took a farm-house on Long Island, where they kept cows and pigs and hens and planted an English garden, and the girls learnt to ride. Later they moved across the bay to Jersey City. The children went to school, and their father started a new sugar-refinery. He also went to an anti-slavery meeting addressed by William Lloyd Garrison, and afterwards jumped on the platform and introduced himself. A friendship arose at once, and Garrison became a regular visitor at the Blackwell's home.

They made other friends, but in general Blackwell was disappointed in America. He found it was not such a free

land as he had hoped, and when he made his proposals for the use of beet sugar almost the whole sugar-industry was hostile. The opponents of slavery were still in a minority, although in England they had just won the final victory. In the year after the Blackwells emigrated the slaves were set free throughout the British Empire. In the United States—even in New York—Garrison's paper the *Liberator* was read surreptitiously.

Blackwell himself was open enough, and deliberately left the paper lying about for all visitors to his home to see. He also began writing himself, and published a volume of poems under his own name with the title *Anti-Slavery Rhymes.* This did his business no good, and at times he was in personal danger. On the fourth of July, 1834, a mob wrecked a meeting of the newly formed American Anti-Slavery Society, and Blackwell reached home with his coat torn and his stole missing. On the same day the home of another Abolitionist was attacked, and the houses of some Negro families were burnt down.

The Blackwells were involved in more danger after a Presbyterian minister, Samuel Cox, preached a sermon in which he reminded his congregation that "Lord Jesus belonged to a race with darker skins than our own." Word went round that "Dr Cox has called Christ a nigger," and devout Christians who found Biblical sanction for slavery were infuriated. This was understandable; devout Christians who to-day support colour-bars also get annoyed when they are reminded that the Founder of Christianity was a non-European. A mob arose and, full of religious zeal, smashed the windows of Cox's church and tried to wreck it, and then broke into his private house, shouting that they were going to hang him on the nearest tree. But Blackwell had been there first, with a closed carriage, and taken off Cox and his wife and five children.

The Coxes stayed in hiding at the Blackwells' home for three weeks. To make room for them, four of the girls gave up their beds and slept in the attic on quilts laid on the floor.

Elizabeth, at least, enjoyed suffering for a good cause, and was sorry when it was safe for Cox and his family to return home. She was the strongest supporter in the family of her father's rebellious views.

Meanwhile business was bad, and the Blackwells were hard up. Another child had been born in America, and there was little money for servants. Elizabeth had to swallow her distaste for needlework and help to make shirts for her younger brothers and frocks for the smaller girls. They could not afford a governess now, and Anna became chief schoolmistress for the younger children. She still wanted to be a writer, and showed a talent for teaching too. Elizabeth had to help her and did her best, but she knew this was not her vocation. She was restless and impatient and still wanted to do something hard.

She was sixteen when her father's business crashed. There was a financial crisis in New York and a run on the banks, and he had to sell his refinery for what he could get. He set up a furnace and boiler in the cellar of his own house to continue his favourite experiments in refining sugar from beet, but ran out of funds. Finally he took his family away from New York to Cincinnati. He had made an exploratory visit, and liked the atmosphere of freedom and intellectual activity of the town. It had only one small sugar-refinery, and Blackwell thought he could build up a new business.

They travelled by stage-coach, and then by canal-boat down the Ohio river, and moved into their new home. Blackwell was sick, and a doctor had to be called before they had unpacked. He was very ill, and never had a chance to put any of his plans into practice. Within a few months he was dead.

Anna was twenty-three and Marion twenty-one, and Elizabeth nearly eighteen. The oldest of the boys, Samuel, was only fifteen. Their father had little money to leave them, and the girls had to start earning at once. There was only one job that any one of them could do, and all three could do that: teaching.

They founded a school in their own home. Elizabeth took over the job of canvassing for pupils, and went round the houses interviewing parents. She liked this better than teaching, and left the running of the school to Anna and Marion and their mother, who also helped in class. The school did well enough to pay off their debts and provide them with a living, and the pressure was eased when Samuel and another of the boys went out to work.

They made friends, too. One of them was Harriet Beecher Stowe. She was an almost unknown writer then, but she and her husband held literary evenings and were prominent in movements that the Blackwell girls had learnt about from their father, especially anti-slavery and women's rights. It was at the Stowes' house that Elizabeth first saw the Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial.*

The Blackwells' school lasted six years. Then the boys were earning good money, and insisted that it should be given up. The girls were not sorry. Anna, nearly thirty, still wanted to be a writer, and she was to achieve this aim. Marion preferred housekeeping to teaching, and enjoyed reading and being ill. Elizabeth, now twenty-three, was glad to give up teaching, but was left with nothing to do.

They should all have been married, of course, and there was some truth in Aunt Bar's old assertion that their father had brought them up all wrong. They had to learn household work in spite of their early training, but they were unfitted for the submissive role that was then expected of wives. They had grown up with the idea that men and women had equal rights, and when the Stowes took them to a meeting in favour of women's rights they were surprised to hear ideas they had always taken for granted being put out as revolutionary. In an age when most girls accepted marriage as a form of domestic service the independent-minded Blackwell sisters were not greatly sought after as brides.

Yet Elizabeth was a good deal more feminine than anyone guessed. Later she confessed that from the age of seven, when she fell in love with a "golden-haired rosy-cheeked little

fellow who seemed to me like a little angel," she was always susceptible to what she called "the disturbing influence exercised by the other sex." Men attracted her; but she fought against their attractions, because she disliked the idea of marriage. She was too good a fighter to lose the struggle.

After the school was closed she fretted impatiently, full of energy and unable to find an outlet for it. At last she could stand it no longer and took a job—as a teacher! It was certainly not what she wanted, but there was nothing else she could do. It was at a girls' school in Kentucky, and when she arrived she found it was a dirty frame building built on a mud bank. She cleaned it out and tried to teach fourteen sleepy, lazy girls. She boarded in a private house, and had to share an attic bedroom with three dull women, and found none of the social intercourse she was used to at Cincinnati.

But the worst of her new Kentucky home was the sight of the slaves. She had heard and read enough about them, and found that not all of it was strictly true. The slaves she saw were not physically ill-treated; but their mental degradation was worse than anything she had imagined. Once when she was in a sitting-room she remarked casually that the fire was rather hot—and immediately a slave was summoned and ordered to stand in front of it, as a kind of human fire-screen. Such incidents depressed her so much that she decided to leave. A young farmer showed interest in her, but politely she showed that she did not return it. She could not imagine herself a Kentucky farmer's wife.

So after only one term she returned home, resumed her friendship with the Stowes, helped Marion to translate French and German books, and studied music and metaphysics. Life still seemed utterly aimless.

Elizabeth never had a Call. She was drawn to medicine by accident. It all began when she was visiting a friend of her mother's who was dying of cancer. Elizabeth sat by her bed and read to her and talked. One day the woman said, "You are fond of study, and have health and leisure—why not

study medicine? If I could have been treated by a lady doctor my worst sufferings would have been spared me."

Elizabeth remembered an incident in her own schooldays, when a new master had come to teach physiology and had brought a bullock's eye into the classroom. It was all bloody in its casing of fat, and Elizabeth had felt violently sick. "I hate anything to do with the body," she told her mother's friend.

But the idea stuck, and soon it occurred to her it might be the lesser of two evils. The other evil was marriage.

Elizabeth was in love. The man was intelligent and well educated, and wanted to marry her. As she had never loved anyone so much before, it would have been an ideal match. The only objection to it was that she did not want to be married. But this time it was not so easy to win the struggle against her feelings, and she looked for a counter-attraction. "I must have something to engross my thoughts, some object in life which will fill this vacuum and prevent this sad wearing away of the heart," she wrote in her diary. Her own weakness annoyed her, and she determined to end the matter. "I grew indignant with myself at a struggle that weakened me, and resolved to take a step that I hoped might cut the knot I could not untie and restore full mental freedom." She resolved to become a doctor.

She told her mother and sisters, and they took it calmly. They knew there were no qualified women doctors in America, but if Elizabeth decided to be one they were quite sure she would. She had always done what she had resolved to do, and it did not occur to them that she might fail. "Our Elie can do it if anyone can," said her brother Henry, and the others all thought the same. The only doubt was expressed by Marion, who said that from her experience Elizabeth was the last woman in the world who ought to be a doctor. Perhaps she remembered the lobelia.

Three things inspired Elizabeth to become a doctor. The first was her feeling of frustration at having nothing to do. The second was her falling in love and not wanting to marry.

The third was that it was almost impossible for her to become a doctor.

The last factor probably clinched it. She had always wanted to do something hard. She could scarcely have found anything harder.

She told the Stowes about it, and they were astonished. There was no law against a woman becoming a doctor, but the prejudice would be tremendous. There was no law compelling medical schools to admit a woman, and she could be quite sure that none of them would. Harriet Beecher Stowe advised her to give up the idea and take up something she could do at home—writing, for example.

Elizabeth told Dr Reuben Mussey, the leading physician in Cincinnati. He was horrified. No medical school in America would admit a woman, he said. The French schools might be more liberal, but they would offend her decency. "The methods of instruction are such that no lady could stay there six weeks." She heard that objection many times. Any course of medical training involved learning more about the human body than a respectable unmarried woman of that age was supposed to know.

Elizabeth wrote in her diary: "I am determined to become a physician."

She wrote to a doctor in New York, asking him for information about medical schools and advice on her plans. He sent the information but no advice. She asked other doctors, with similar results. Paris was sometimes suggested, for it was believed—incorrectly, as it happened—that in France women could attend lectures in every branch of medical science, although they could not obtain a diploma. But she was advised not to go to Paris, because it was believed—also incorrectly—to be a sink of immorality, a city of sin, where no decent woman could safely go. People who have never been there sometimes express similarly quaint ideas about Paris to-day.

Elizabeth could not deny one objection that was raised, and that was the need for money. A medical training was

expensive, and far beyond her means. She had the support of her family, but they could not raise the money. Friends offered to help, and one woman wanted to lend her a thousand dollars; but she could only find a hundred, and as Elizabeth needed three thousand she declined the loan. She decided to do it the hard way and earn the money herself. The bullock's eye was forgotten now, and she was absolutely determined. She still felt no vocation for medicine, no burning desire to help suffering humanity; but she felt very strongly about forcing the profession to let women in. "The idea of winning a doctor's degree gradually assumed the aspect of a great moral struggle," she wrote in her diary, and confessed that "the moral fight proved an immense attraction to me."

The only way Elizabeth could earn money was by teaching, so when she was twenty-four she went south again. She went to Asheville, North Carolina, to teach in a small school run by the Rev. John Dickson. He had been a doctor himself, and had a fine medical library; and he gave her some preliminary instruction in physics and chemistry. He applauded her ambition, although he doubted her success.

One day another teacher brought her a dead beetle, crushed in a handkerchief, and offered it as a subject for dissection. Immediately her old squeamishness returned, and the thought of touching the corpse made her feel physically sick. Her determination fought and won another battle, and she jabbed the dead insect with a knife. To her relief, all that came out was a little yellow powder. "It was my first exercise in dissection," she wrote home. "I don't think I shall ever again be timid." She never was.

She stayed for nearly a year at Asheville. Among other things she started a Sunday School for Negro children, and nearly got into trouble for trying to teach them to read and write. This was forbidden by the laws of the state.

At length the school was closed, and on Dickson's advice Elizabeth went to Charleston to continue her pre-medical studies with his brother, Dr Samuel Dickson. He was not

only a practising physician but a professor in the medical school in the city. He also approved of her ambition but warned her that he could not help her to get into a school. However, he willingly let her use his library and gave her some instruction in Greek and anatomy and physiology. He also introduced her to a relative who ran a girls' boarding school, where Elizabeth went to work as music teacher.

She worked furiously. She rose at five in the morning, studied until breakfast, taught for eight hours in the school, and then went on studying in the evening until she could not keep awake. At the same time she hoarded her money.

Philadelphia was the medical centre of the United States, and she wrote to a Quaker physician there, Dr Joseph Warrington, who had opened a school for training "gentlewomen" to become nurses. She told him her hopes and asked his advice. He took her letter seriously, and asked intelligent women in Philadelphia for their views. They all assured him they would have nothing to do with a woman doctor. Then he sent Elizabeth a long reply. "If the project be of divine origin and appointment," he said, "it will sooner or later be accomplished." But he added that in his opinion she would do better to devote herself to "the holy duties of nursing the sick." He said that in his opinion it was appropriate that "man be the physician and woman the nurse." Incidentally Florence Nightingale gave exactly the same answer when she was asked to support the cause of women doctors. She was always a disappointment to the champions of women's rights.

Elizabeth took heart from Dr Warrington's letter in spite of his last remarks, and after two years in North Carolina she went to Philadelphia. She lodged with another Quaker doctor, William Elder, who arranged for her to take instruction in anatomy at a private school run by Dr Joseph Allen. He also promised to give her instruction in chemistry himself, so that if she succeeded in getting into a medical school she would be better prepared than most new students.

Dr Allen taught her dissection, and was full of praise for her work. He only said it was a pity that she would never

be able to qualify as a doctor. But that was the one thing Elizabeth would never believe. Armed with letters of introduction from Dr Elder, she began paying visits to the leading doctors of Philadelphia. She succeeded in winning over a professor at one of the city's medical colleges, and he took the question up with his colleagues; but they turned down the proposal for her admission out of hand. She applied to the other medical schools, and Dr Warrington backed her; but the result was the same. Finally Dr Warrington told her it was no use. If she was still determined, he said, she must go to Paris "and don masculine attire to gain the necessary knowledge." Elizabeth would not hear of this. Unless she went to a medical school as a woman she would not be winning her moral fight.

Dr Warrington took her round with him on his medical calls, and she wrote to medical schools in New York and other cities. Still they turned her down. There was a heatwave in the summer, and Dr Allen closed his school temporarily. Elizabeth accepted an invitation from her sisters to spend a holiday with them by the sea. None of them were married, although Anna had had a secret romance. There were echoes of it in some of her poems, which were published and highly praised by Edgar Allen Poe. One of the boys had followed his father's example and written verses against slavery. Her brothers all promised to help her financially, even if it meant paying for her to go to Europe. She was considering this seriously now, and talked about it with Anna, who was winning a reputation as a journalist and thought of becoming a foreign correspondent. But Elizabeth had not given up hope in America yet.

After a holiday of six weeks she began writing to the smaller medical schools; and more rejections came in. From the dean of one of these schools she had a reply that was at least honest. "You cannot expect me to furnish you with a stick to break our heads with," he said. He was the only one who admitted the medical profession's financial reason for wanting to exclude women.

Elizabeth now got a list of all the smaller medical schools in the northern states. She obtained their prospectuses, studied them carefully, and selected twelve. She applied to each, bringing her total number of applications to twenty-nine. Eleven turned her down. The twelfth was one of the smallest medical schools in the country—at Geneva, in New York State, near the Canadian border. The school authorities decided to put her application before the students and let them give the answer. Then they wrote to Elizabeth and told her that the students had resolved "that to every branch of scientific education the door should be open equally to all, and that the application of Elizabeth Blackwell to become a member of our class meets with our entire approbation."

The battle was won. Elizabeth Blackwell was going to be a doctor.

9

LOUISA ALCOTT

LOUISA ALCOTT made no secret of the sources of *Little Women*. Jo March was herself, and the other girls were her sisters. Mr March was based on her father. "Mr March is all true, only not half good enough. Laurie is not an American boy, though every lad I ever knew claims the character; he was a Polish boy, met abroad in 1865. Mr Lawrence is my grandfather, Colonel Joseph May. Aunt March is no one." None of the portraits was entirely faithful, for in fiction characters are never quite true to their originals. Each of them is bound to contain something of the author too.

Louy, as they called her at home, was born at Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 29, 1832. It was her father's thirty-third birthday. He was a schoolmaster and a philosopher, and Louy later defined a philosopher as "a man up in a balloon, with his family and friends holding the ropes which confine him to earth and trying to haul him down." That was a pretty fair description of Bronson Alcott.

The son of a poor Connecticut farmer, he never went to school himself. His father could not afford it, and he did not believe in education, anyway. His mother taught him to read and write, and he learnt the rest himself. As a boy he worked on the farm and then in a clock-factory, but soon made up his mind to be a teacher. He left home at eighteen and went to Virginia, hoping to study and teach. Instead, he spent four years as a travelling pedlar, but he educated himself in his spare time. He returned to New England and became a teacher after all.

Bronson Alcott was a crank. Teaching at that time meant mostly making children learn what were called facts and encouraging them to study by hitting them with a stick. That

was not his idea of education. He did not believe in harsh discipline, and he did not regard children as so much clay to be moulded or puppies to be trained. He believed in guidance rather than compulsion. He did not make his pupils learn things by heart, but encouraged them to think for themselves and develop their own ideas. "My father taught in the wise way which unfolds what lies in the child's nature, as a flower blooms, rather than crammed it, like a Strasbourg goose, with more than it could digest," wrote Louy. These ideas, revolutionary at the time, are more common now, and if they are not yet generally accepted perhaps they will be one day. Bronson Alcott was more than a hundred years ahead of his time, but we are gradually catching him up.

A few intelligent and influential people appreciated Alcott's ideas, which appealed especially to some of the Quakers in Pennsylvania. But his chief supporter died about the time of Louy's birth, and soon afterwards the school failed. The Alcotts moved to Philadelphia and opened a new school there, but that was not a success either. Then they went to Boston, Massachusetts. Louy was then eighteen months old, and she had one sister, Anna, who was three. They had to get used to moving; in the first twenty-eight years of her life Louy changed houses twenty-nine times.

They went to Boston by steamer down the Delaware, and soon after the start of the voyage Louy disappeared. The boat was searched, and after an hour she was found in the engine-room, covered with coal-dust and black grease and very happy. She was always fond of running away.

Bronson Alcott opened a new school in Boston, in the Masonic Temple. It began well, with thirty pupils, and the number increased. He engaged an assistant, Elizabeth Peabody, who was later a pioneer of kindergarten teaching in the United States. But at the Temple School, as it was called, she took the elder children. Alcott himself preferred to teach the infants, and he took them from the age of three.

Anna went to the school, but Louy never did. Another girl was born the year after they arrived in Boston, and named

after Miss Peabody. A boy was born later, but died in infancy. The children's mother taught music at the school.

Alcott had his critics in Boston, and naturally other teachers were prominent among them. He was blamed for giving his pupils too much freedom and for teaching them on unorthodox lines. He also had his supporters, and made good friends, many of whom later became famous. One of the first was Ralph Waldo Emerson. He was a young man of thirty-two when he first met Alcott, and had not yet published a book. They liked each other at once, and together developed a new philosophy, called Transcendentalism, which was a revolt against humdrum orthodoxy and materialism. Emerson visited the Temple School, and took his friend Margaret Fuller; and Alcott visited Emerson at his home in Concord.

Alcott taught Louy to read and write at home, but she preferred play to studies and was not keen on staying at home. "Running away was one of the delights of my early days," she said later. She liked exploring on her own, and when she was six she went off to explore Boston. She went round the wharves, played with some ragged children, stroked the alley cats, smiled at strangers, and generally enjoyed herself. Of course, she got lost, but she was not frightened. She walked on until she felt tired, and then sat down in a doorway to rest. A big dog kept her company, and she put her head on its back and fell asleep. It was dusk when she woke, and a man was walking along the street shouting and ringing a bell. He was the town crier, and she sat up to listen to what he had to say. "Lost, a little girl, six years old, in a pink frock, white hat, and new green shoes," he called out. "Why, that's me!" Louy called back—and he had a job to persuade her to leave the dog.

She was very fond of pets. Once, when she made a list of her faults, she included "love of cats." Another item in the list was "activity." She was extraordinarily energetic. "I always thought I must have been a deer or a horse in some former state, because it was such a joy to run." She had plenty of stamina. When she was older she walked twenty

miles in five hours and then went to a party in the evening. In Boston her favourite haunt was the Common, where she played for hours and ruined her clothes. With Anna going to school and Lizzie still a baby, she went off alone with her hoop, and once she followed it into the Frog Pond. It was too deep for her to stand, and she could not swim, and she thought she was going to drown. Then she saw a dark face above her, and the next moment two strong black arms lifted her out and put her down safely on the bank.

Louy said later that this Negro boy may have made her an Abolitionist, but no doubt she had already heard plenty of anti-slavery talk from her father. He did not just talk, either. Once, when she was in the kitchen, Louy heard a strange noise in the brick oven, and opened the door and looked in. She saw a wild, terrified black face, and jumped back and slammed the door and ran to her mother. Then she was told that it was "contraband"—a runaway slave from the South, making his way to Canada and freedom. The Alcotts risked punishment by hiding him, for giving refuge to a runaway slave was a criminal offence.

Alcott never hid his views on slavery, and one of his friends was William Lloyd Garrison, who was dragged through the streets with a noose round his neck and nearly lynched for saying the slaves should be set free. Garrison was put in gaol for his own protection, and Alcott openly went and visited him. This did not do his school any good, for it was commonly said that an Abolitionist was not a fit man to teach children. Supporting the anti-slavery movement was then generally considered an un-American activity.

In 1837 Alcott did himself more harm by publishing a book entitled *Conversations with Children on the Gospels.* This was a record, taken down by Elizabeth Peabody, of talks with some of his pupils, and it was violently attacked in the Boston Press. A professor of Harvard denounced it as "one-third absurd, one-third blasphemous, and one-third obscene." A mob was whipped up, led by teachers, clergymen, and parents, and besieged the school. Alcott was told

to shut his school down and burn his filthy book. He did neither, but the number of pupils diminished. Emerson and his other friends defended him in the Press, but they were in the minority.

Then the English author Harriet Martineau came to Boston and visited the school. She spend only half an hour in the classroom, and then went home and wrote a violent attack on the Alcott system, which she published in her book *Society in America.* The book was widely read and favourably reviewed in Boston, and Alcott's prestige dropped lower. Then, in 1838, he made the end certain. He admitted a coloured girl to the school.

The mother of one of his other pupils led a committee of twenty to the school, burst into the classroom, and said she was not going to have her child contaminated by "black scum." Actually the child wanted to stay, but, of course, Alcott had to let her go. The rest of his class soon followed, and in the end he had hardly any pupils left. The school had to close. It was the end of his teaching career.

Emerson went round Boston trying to get his friend a job, but without success. Finally he asked the Alcotts to move to Concord. They went into a small cottage with about an acre of land, and Emerson paid the rent. He urged Alcott to write for his living, and Alcott tried; but the only paper that would publish his writings was the Transcendentalist magazine *The Dial,* which Emerson himself edited. Alcott made a few dollars by giving lectures, but worked mainly as a gardener and odd-job man, cutting wood and doing casual farm-work. At home he continued to teach his children, and entertained Emerson and his other friends, who included young Henry David Thoreau from Walden. Like Emerson, he was destined for literary fame. Another visitor was Nathaniel Hawthorne, who for a time was a member of the Transcendentalist community at Brook Farm.

Life was not easy for the Alcotts. They had to cook their meals over an open fire, as they could not afford a stove, and the meals themselves were plain and not always ade-

quate. If they found others in greater need they went without food themselves. "Once we carried our breakfast to a starving family," Louy wrote later. "Once we lent our whole dinner to a neighbour suddenly taken unprepared by distinguished guests." For a time they reduced their meals from three to two a day in order to give the third to a family even poorer than themselves.

Soon after they moved into the cottage Louy went to stay with some friends of the family at Providence. At first she enjoyed herself, exploring a spice-mill and playing with animals and being spoilt because she was the only child in the house. Then she wanted the company of boys and girls of her own age, and went out to find it. She soon became friendly with some ragged, dirty children, and played with them in the barn. She learnt they were hungry, because their parents were poor; so she went to get them food from the house. She took them cakes and figs, and made several journeys; and at last she was caught, scolded, and packed off to the attic.

She was hurt and bewildered. She had taken the food openly, for it had never occurred to her that she was doing wrong. At home her parents were always giving food away to the poor, even if it meant going short themselves. Here there was more than enough for every one in the house, so it was only natural to give some to the hungry children outside; and yet they were treating her as if she had stolen the food. She was not sorry to return home.

Another girl was born, and named Abba May. When Louy was eight she wrote a poem, "To the First Robin," after finding a half-starved robin in the garden on a cold morning and taking it into the warm and feeding it. "You will grow up to be a Shakespeare," said her mother; and Louy had indeed already begun to make up plays. She and her sisters performed them in the barn, with the help of the Hosmer children from next door. They did their own versions of "Cinderella" and "Jack and the Beanstalk," and other plays of their own invention. Their mother may have sometimes

wished her husband was more worldly and less philosophical, but Bronson Alcott's children were not unhappy.

Louy's best friend was one of the Hosmer boys, Cyrus. She preferred boys to girls and dogs to dolls. "I was born with a boy's spirit under my bib and tucker," she wrote later. She was always seeking adventures in the woods and fields, and Cyrus was always goading her on. "You darsn't do that," was his favourite sentence, and Louy could never resist a dare. Cy dared her to jump off a high beam in the barn, and she had to be carried home on a board with both ankles sprained. Cy dared her to rub red peppers in her eyes "to see how it felt," and had to guide her home howling. Another time she was given tobacco by some of the workers in the fields and dared to chew it, and she was so sick they had to push her home in a wheelbarrow. She was lucky to have parents who let her run wild and did not constrain her with any ideas of prim respectability. "No boy could be my friend till I had beaten him in a race, and no girl if she refused to climb trees, leap fences, and be a tomboy."

Once Emerson and Margaret Fuller visited the cottage and had a long talk with Bronson Alcott about education. As they were about to go Miss Fuller asked if she could see Alcott's own "model children." At that moment they came rushing round the corner with a wheelbarrow. "I was the horse, bridled and driven by my elder sister Anna," Louy recalled later. "Lizzie played dog, and barked as loud as her gentle voice permitted." Little May, covered with flowers, was the passenger. They were all shouting and laughing when they saw the visitors, and then Louy tripped and they all went down in a heap.

Their mother gestured towards them.

"Here are the model children, Miss Fuller," she said; and Miss Fuller and Emerson laughed approvingly, for they also believed in self-expression for children.

Emerson considered that Bronson Alcott was "the most refined and the most advanced soul we have had in New England," and he continued to do all he could to help him.

At one time he invited the Alcotts to move into his house, but Bronson declined. Then, when Louy was in her tenth year, he persuaded her father to visit England. Emerson promised to get up a subscription to pay his fare, but most of the money came out of Emerson's own pocket.

The main purpose of the journey was for Alcott to see a school named after him—Alcott House—where his teaching principles were put into practice. It was near Richmond, Surrey, and the director was a man named Charles Lane. He and Alcott took an instant liking to each other, found they had similar views on Transcendentalism and other subjects, and decided to start a new communal settlement after the lines of Brook Farm. After some discussion they thought it would be better to found it in America than in England, and Lane agreed to go back with Alcott. He took his son, William; and another enthusiast, Henry Wright, went too. They all left together after Alcott had met Robert Owen, the pioneer socialist, and Emerson's friend Thomas Carlyle.

In his letters home Alcott hinted that he had great new plans, but did not say what they were. He arrived back at Concord in October 1842, after five months' absence, and introduced the Lanes and Wright, who, he said, would stay at the cottage. This was the first time his wife had even heard of them, and, as the cottage had already proved hardly big enough for two adults and four children, her hospitality was a bit strained.

However, it was only for one winter. Next spring they would all move, Alcott told her, to start a new life—"a new Eden." He began to tell them what it would be like, and for the rest of that winter he and Lane talked of little else. "Mother, they've begun again," Louy used to say, and Mrs Alcott wondered where it was all going to end. She was an intelligent woman, she shared many of her husband's ideas and was in sympathy with most of the rest; but she was a mother and housewife, and Bronson's philosophy made housekeeping difficult, especially when there was no money. Alcott was a vegetarian, because he believed it was immoral

to kill animals and eat them. He thought it was wrong to steal from animals—for example, milk from the cow. Nor would he touch food that had been obtained by slave labour, and that ruled out coffee and sugar. The family therefore lived on a diet of bread, rice, fruit, vegetables, and water. Now that the Lanes and Wright had to be fed the portions were even smaller than before, and Alcott reduced them further by giving one eighth of their food to a poor neighbour. If his children suffered they did not complain, and they seem to have been perfectly healthy.

Clothing aroused the same moral problems as food. Alcott would not use cotton, because it was produced by slave labour. Wool was stolen from the sheep, and even silk belonged to the silkworms. There was no rayon or nylon then, so all that was left was linen, and they wore it although it was unsuitable for a cold climate. Alcott, always logical, objected to leather also and wanted his family to walk about bare-footed, but his wife insisted that the children should keep their shoes. She also opposed him over the matter of oil for the lamps. The only available supply was animal oil, so Alcott said they would have to do without artificial light altogether. His wife said the only time she had for mending was in the evenings, and so an exception was made of "Mother's lamp."

To laugh is easy but not very clever. Men like Alcott have always been ridiculed by the smug and the stupid. Emerson, who did not share all his friend's views, said that "as pure intellect I have never seen his equal." Whatever mistakes he may have made, Alcott gave the world ideas, especially in education, for which we all owe him thanks; while most people who ate meat and wore wool and lived respectable, conventional lives finally vanished without leaving a trace. Orthodoxy has never given the world anything.

It was a cold winter, and their only fuel was wood; and at one time their stock got very low. On a snowy Saturday night a poor child came to beg for some wood, pleading that the baby was sick and that the father of the family was "on a

spree with all his wages." Mrs Alcott hesitated, but her husband made up her mind. "Give half our stock, and trust in Providence," he said. "The weather will moderate, or wood will come." Mrs Alcott was less hopeful, but thought that if the worst came to the worst they could all go to bed and tell stories, and they could not let a sick baby suffer.

The same evening another neighbour called at the cottage. He had set out for Boston with a load of wood, but the snowdrifts were so bad that he had abandoned the journey. He did not want to take his wood back, and wondered if the Alcotts would take it; they could pay for it at their leisure. "I told you we would not suffer," Bronson said to his wife.

Lane gave lessons to Anna and Louy, for they were now above the age of the children their father liked to teach. Meanwhile Alcott was nearly sent to gaol. He refused to pay his taxes, as a protest against the Government's attitude to the slavery question, and he was arrested and taken to the door of the prison. There a judge who knew and liked him paid his debt, and Bronson returned home.

In the spring they found a place for the "New Eden"—a hillside farm near Harvard, Massachusetts, with an old seven-roomed farm-house. It had been empty for years and was in bad repair, and when Mrs Alcott first saw it she thought it was like "a refined kind of pigsty." The land had not been tilled for a long time, but Bronson recalled that he was a farmer's son. A few other enthusiasts joined the company, and they moved to Fruitlands, as they called it, in June.

The Fruitlands experiment was based on a theory of communal anarchism. Bronson Alcott and his companions believer that private property was wrong and that everything should be owned in common; that there should be no bosses, no laws, no authority of any kind; that all should work, and that the rewards should be equally shared. The idea was not new—Brook Farm had been a similar kind of experiment—and it was not bound to fail. When groups of pioneers try to break away from our artificial way of living there are always plenty of silly people to tell them that they cannot

succeed and that communal anarchism will not work. As a matter of fact it is working very well in various parts of the world to-day, and some of the thriving communal settlements in Israel are now over forty years old.

But the Fruitlands pioneers were exceptionally ambitious. They not only opposed the hiring of labour, but they believed it was wrong for men to force animals to work for them, as this was a kind of slavery. Actually they had to bring in two oxen, but this was only a temporary measure. As there was no motor transport in those days, they proposed to dispense with the plough and, with spade and pruning-knife, to do all the work with their own hands.

They began with high hopes, and sowed maize and rye, oats and barley, potatoes and beans, melons and squash. They celebrated Lizzie's birthday soon after they arrived, and decorated a tree with presents and walked in procession and sang to Charles Lane's violin. Emerson went to see them in July. "The sun and the evening sky do not look calmer than Alcott and his family at Fruitlands," he wrote. "Young men and young maidens, old men and women, should visit them and be inspired." Emerson added more cautiously: "I will not prejudge them successful. They look well in July; we will see them in December."

They still looked well in August, when the community had grown to sixteen. Charles Lane continued to teach the older girls, but, as he had little time to spare, a new teacher, Miss Page, was asked to join the community. The girls described life at Fruitlands in their diaries, and they seem to have enjoyed themselves. "My favourite word is beautiful," wrote Anna. Louy gave more details.

"September 1, 1843. I rose at five and had my bath. How I love cold water! Then we had our singing lesson with Mr Lane. After breakfast I washed dishes, and ran on the hill till nine, and had some thoughts—it was so beautiful up there. Did my lessons, wrote and spelt and did sums, and Mr L. read a story. . . . We had bread and fruit for dinner. I read and walked and played till supper-time. We sang in the

evening. As I went to bed the moon came up very brightly and looked at me. . . .

"September 11. I had a music lesson with Miss P. I hate her, she is so fussy. I ran in the wind and played to be a horse, and had a lovely time in the woods with Anna and Lizzie. We were fairies and made gowns and proper wings."

If Bronson Alcott did not always consider his wife enough, no one can say he failed as a parent.

But he failed as a farmer. Other visitors came after Emerson, but he did not need to return in December. By then Fruitlands was doomed. No doubt this was at least partly because the men were too unpractical, and Alcott and Lane were the worst. The chief crop of their newly broken fields was barley, and the harvest was quite good. The barley was cut and stacked to dry, and all that remained was to put it in the barn for the winter. This was vital; the future of the community depended largely on it.

It was at this time that Alcott and Lane were asked to attend a Transcendentalist conference. They could not refuse, so the barley had to wait. They set out for the conference on a calm day; and the next day clouds came over, and there was thunder and lightning in the distance. The barley had to be got into the barn, and what was left of the Alcott family had to get it. Mrs Alcott took linen sheets, and the children and William Lane went out with baskets and bags, and somehow they had most of the precious crop under cover before the storm broke.

By the time the corn was harvested most of the community had given up, and at last there were only the Alcotts and the Lanes. They worked very hard, and the children helped to husk the corn, working till eight in the evening with lamps. But already they knew that the first harvest at Fruitlands would also be the last.

The crisis came in November. On the twentieth Louy wrote: "Father and Mr L. had a talk, and father asked us if *we* saw any reason for us to separate. Mother wanted to, she is so tired. I like it, but not the school part or Mr L."

Her mother had also had enough of Mr L., and it was only natural that he should be blamed for their lack of success. In January they all left Fruitlands, and the Alcotts had to accept help from an uncle to buy their food and pay their rent. "Mr Alcott cannot bring himself to work for gain," his wife wrote in her diary, "but we have not yet learned to live without money or means." A few weeks later she wrote: "Should like to see my husband a little more interested in this matter of support. I love his faith and quiet reliance on Divine Providence, but a little more activity and industry would place us beyond most of these disagreeable dependencies on friends."

They moved to Still River, and Alcott did some gardening. Louy also started work, although it is not clear if it was for profit. "At twelve I set up as a doll's dressmaker, with my sign out and wonderful models in my window, All the children employed me, and my turbans were the rage at one time, to the great dismay of the neighbours' hens, who were hotly hunted down that I might tweak out their downiest feathers to adorn the children's headgear."

Then they went back to Concord, and at last bought a house of their own. The money came partly from a legacy and partly from Emerson. The house was called Hillside, and there, Louy said, she spent the happiest time of her life. She had a room of her own, and there was a barn opposite where she and Anna put on their plays. She wrote some of her own, including a drama in three acts called *Duke Roderigo's Boots.*

Both the elder girls were mad on acting, although Louy was still more like a boy than a girl. "I am old for my age," she wrote at thirteen, "and don't care much for girl's things. People think I'm wild and queer; but mother understands and helps me." She confided her thoughts to her diary, and her father was amused when he compared it with Anna's. "Anna's is about other people, Louisa's about herself," he said.

They had a new teacher, Miss Foord; and for two months

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

Photo "Picture Post"

SARAH BERNHARDT

Photo "Picture Post"

in 1846 they had Charles Lane back again. It is not quite clear why he came, but it seems that it was a difference of opinion with Mrs Alcott that made him go again. The girls then went to school for a year. This was all the education outside the home that Louy ever had. She distinguished herself only as the fastest runner and best jumper of all the girls. She was fourteen then, and after that her education was continued by her father with the help of Thoreau and Emerson.

She fell in love with Emerson. "My romantic period began at fifteen, when I fell to writing poetry, keeping a heart-journal, and wandering by moonlight instead of sleeping quietly." She read of a little German girl's adoration of Goethe, and brought the story into her own life. She put flowers on Emerson's doorstep, without leaving a card. She sang a serenade under his window—in German, and so quietly that there was no danger that he would hear it. She wrote him love-letters, but never sent them. She got over it, of course; but eight years later, when her elder sister married, Louy wrote in her diary: "Mr Emerson kissed Anna; and I thought that honour would make even matrimony endurable." As a girl she liked boys better than girls, but as a woman she never wanted a husband.

At sixteen Louy began teaching in the barn, and one of her pupils was Emerson's daughter Ellen. Louy wrote some poems and stories for her, about flowers and birds. She read them to Ellen, and then threw them among her plays and other manuscripts. She had not yet thought of writing for profit. Like Anna, she wanted to go on the stage.

Bronson Alcott was still earning very little money when his wife was offered a post as visitor to the poor in Boston. At the same time one of her brothers offered them his house to live in. They decided to move. Bronson would give lectures and perhaps earn a little that way, and the older girls could teach.

Anna taught. She ran a school on her own, and had twenty pupils. Louy did odd jobs, like sewing and watching small

children, and helping her mother at home. She missed the hills and woods, and disliked Boston's "bustle and dirt."

They had been there less than two years when the whole family had smallpox. They probably caught it from some poor immigrants whom Mrs Alcott had brought into the garden to feed. "No doctors, and all got well," Louy noted afterwards. While Anna was ill she had to take over the school. She was then seventeen and a half. "I like it better than I thought," she wrote, "though it's very hard to be patient with the children sometimes.... I guess this is the teaching I need; for as a school-marm I must behave myself and guard my tongue and temper carefully, and set an example of sweet manners." A month later, "School is hard work, and I feel as though I should like to run away from it." Anna apparently had the same idea. "Anna wants to be an actress and so do I. We could make plenty of money perhaps, and it is a very gay life. Mother says we are too young and must wait. Anna acts often splendidly. I like tragic plays, and shall be a Siddons if I can. We get up fine ones, and make harps, castles, armour, dresses, waterfalls, and thunder, and have great fun."

They spent nearly all their leisure writing and acting plays. Sometimes they were joined by other enthusiasts, but often they did everything themselves. They acted one character after another, sometimes each of them taking five or six parts. Some of the manuscripts of their plays have survived, and they show little talent, let alone genius. They are highly melodramatic, with improbable plots and stilted, high-flown dialogue. There is not a glimpse in them of the author of *Little Women.*

When Louy was eighteen a man called on her mother and asked if she knew anyone who would go as companion to his aged father and invalid sister. He wanted "a lady-like young woman, who would read to her, perform a few light household duties and be treated exactly like a member of the family." Louy, on an impulse, offered to go herself. She found herself the only servant in the house, and had to get

the coal from the shed and the water from the well and scrub and clean all day. She stuck it for seven weeks—and was paid four dollars. She returned home and helped Anna in the school. Lizzie was now the housekeeper—"our angel in a cellar kitchen"—while May, aged twelve, was still at school. "Our poor little home had much love and happiness in it, and was a shelter for lost girls, abused wives, friendless children, and weak or wicked men."

Bronson Alcott gave occasional lectures and held "conversations," but earned hardly any money. From a financial point of view the cleverest thing he did in his life was to take one of Louy's stories to a publisher. It was one of the stories about flowers she had written for Emily Emerson. Her father found it by chance, read it for the first time, saw the talent, and for once acted in a practical way. The story was published when Louy was nineteen, and she was paid five dollars. She said it was "great rubbish," and not to be compared with the wild adventure stories she had begun to write; but nobody wanted to publish these. So she got out the rest of her flower stories, and began to write some more.

Meanwhile they had left their uncle's house, and eventually Mrs Alcott gave up her work as visitor to the poor and took in boarders. Anna went to Syracuse to teach in a school, while Louy went on teaching in Boston. Bronson decided to go west to try his luck at lecturing—"so poor, so hopeful, so serene," his wife said when he left. His letters told her that he was "doing as well as a philosopher can in a money-loving world." He came back in the winter, in the middle of the night, and she went down in her nightcap to let him in. The girls were soon out of bed too. He was cold and tired and hungry, but cheerful, and as they all sat together he told them of his adventures. At last, May, the youngest, asked the question that was in all their minds: "Well, did people pay you?"

He took out his pocket-book. "My overcoat was stolen, and I had to buy a shawl," he said. "Many promises were not kept, and travelling was costly; but I have opened the

way, and another year shall do better." He showed them the contents of his pocket-book: one dollar.

"I call that doing *very well*," said his wife. "Since you are safely home, dear, we don't ask anything more."

Anna came back in the summer, and she and Louy taught together in a school in their own parlour. Louy was still writing, and preparing a collection of stories that was published as a book just after her twenty-second birthday. It was called *Flower Fables*, and she was paid thirty-two dollars.

Shortly before this book came out Louy took another story to a friendly editor of a magazine. He read it, gave it back to her, and said earnestly:

"Stick to your teaching, Miss Alcott. You can't write."

She ignored the advice and wrote *Little Women*.

10

SARAH BERNHARDT

SARAH BERNHARDT has been called the greatest actress that ever lived, but that is only a guess. Even apart from consideration of personal taste—about which there is no disputing—there are no means of comparing actresses of different periods. The cinema leaves its record for future generations to see and hear, but not the theatre. Many who saw the "divine Sarah," as they called her, say that there has been no actress to compare with her since; but memory is an unreliable standard for comparison, and old people generally tend to think everything was better in their young days, including the weather.

Yet Sarah Bernhardt was of some importance in the history of women. She not only had a tremendous influence on dramatic art, but greatly raised the status of actresses. Perhaps she raised it too high: nowadays the public is less interested in who wrote the play than in "who's in it." But here I may be only voicing a writer's prejudice.

Sarah Bernhardt was born in Paris on October 25, 1844. The facts of her parentage and early life are a bit obscure, and she seems to have liked to keep this aura of mystery. Certainly she did little to remove it in her own memoirs, which are not very reliable. There is nothing exceptional about that. The autobiographies of famous persons are often not written by themselves at all, but are 'ghosted' for them, and accuracy is commonly sacrificed for entertainment. Sarah or her 'ghost' did not tell the whole truth or nothing but the truth. She cannot be blamed for this deception in what she wrote about her parents, for they were not married.

Her father was a French Catholic, and he met her mother while he was in Paris studying law. She was Dutch and

half Jewish. They lived together for a time, but had parted before Sarah was born. They both travelled abroad a good deal, and Sarah was left in the nominal care of two aunts. They did not want her either, so she was brought up by a nurse at Quimperlé, in Brittany. Her parents and the aunts sometimes went to see her, but these visits were rare.

The nurse's husband, who acted as Sarah's foster-father, suffered from lumbago, and sometimes could not move. When his wife had to leave the house she left Sarah encaged in a high chair. Once Sarah got out, and fell into the fire. Her foster-father was bedridden and could only shout for help. Neighbours came in, and found Sarah literally smoking, so they immersed her in a pail of milk. Her face was burnt, so when the nurse came back she put on a mask of butter. At the same time she sent a message to Sarah's mother to tell her what had happened.

Her mother came, bringing Baron Larrey, a famous surgeon who was now her lover, and another doctor too. They approved of the butter treatment, which was continued. Sarah's face healed without scars, although her complexion remained unnaturally pink. Her mother now brought her to Paris and put her in a little house at Neuilly, on the banks of the Seine, still under the care of the nurse. This woman's mother-tongue was Breton, and until she was four Sarah did not know a word of French.

When Sarah was five the nurse's husband died. Soon afterwards the nurse married a concierge, and wanted to get rid of the child. This was not easy. Sarah's mother was abroad somewhere, the nurse was not quite sure where; and she could not write, anyway, as she was illiterate. So when she moved into the concierge's single room she took Sarah with her.

Sarah was not at all happy. She missed the little house and especially the garden, and when she was kept indoors she demanded to see "the ceiling of the street." The nurse let her out into the courtyard, where she played with the children of other concierges; and she was in the gutter one day when a

carriage stopped near by and out stepped a man and her Aunt Rosine.

"Aunt Rosine! Aunt Rosine!" Sarah called out, and went running up. Aunt Rosine could hardly recognize the wild, grubby child in the dirty clothes, and she was not pleased when she did. However, she asked the nurse why Sarah was living there, and when she was told she promised to write to her sister and have the child taken away. Then she tried to leave, but Sarah would not say good-bye. "Take me with you, take me with you!" she begged. She clung on to her aunt, so the nurse had to take her inside. Then she jumped out of the window and fell on the pavement, putting her arm out of joint and breaking her kneecap.

Aunt Rosine had to take her away then, and get a doctor and have her looked after properly. At the same time she wrote to Sarah's mother, who came back to Paris and took Sarah into her own apartment. She lived there for two years, under the care of a servant. Then her mother found she was going to have another baby, so she sent Sarah to boarding-school at Auteuil.

At first she was a difficult pupil. At eight she still could not read or write, and she says she could not even count up to ten, although that is probably untrue. But she settled down, and seems to have been quite happy. Sometimes the school was visited by an actress from the Théâtre Français, who recited passages from plays. According to her own story, Sarah listened spellbound, and then tried to repeat the verses in the dormitory; the other girls made fun of her, and she lost her temper and flew at them, punching and kicking. She probably made this story up, for she had no early interest in the stage.

The girls were allowed out on Thursdays and Sundays, and Sarah used to visit her Aunt Henriette, who lived in a pleasant house at Neuilly. She played with her aunt's children, fishing for cray-fish in a near-by stream. She saw little of her mother, who had another daughter, called Jeanne.

Sarah's father was not entirely thoughtless. He paid for her

education, and after she had been at the boarding-school for two years he decided to put her in a convent. His main reason was that he wanted her to have some religious instruction. Her mother had never had any, and he did not want Sarah to grow up like her.

Aunt Rosine went to the boarding-school and broke the news to Sarah, who immediately had a fit of hysterics. Before she was taken away she escaped into the garden and tried to climb the trees and jump into the pond, and was very ill with fever. She stayed first with one aunt and then with the other, and finally her father took her to the Convent of Grand-Champs, at Versailles. She was nine years old.

She hated the convent at first sight. "It seemed to me that I remembered reading in some book the description of a prison, and that it was just like this." She begged her father not to make her stay there. "Papa, papa, I can't go to prison! It is a prison, I am sure. I am frightened—oh, I am so frightened!" Then the Mother Superior came, and she suddenly lost her fears. This woman was kind, and Sarah had never met a really kind woman before. For the first time in her life she felt the power of love.

When she was famous Sarah Bernhardt told many tales of her life in the convent, and more stories came from other sources. Some of them were probably invented, and most were probably coloured; but together they give what may be taken as a fair picture of the sort of girl she became. She still had fits of temper, but most of her wildness was tamed; she liked to be the centre of attraction; she was generous and a good mixer, and very responsive to love.

The convent may have been a barrack-like building, but it stood in its own grounds. Each girl had a little garden of her own, and Sarah was delighted when the Mother Superior told the gardener to mark out a plot for her. At first she did not like the discipline. She objected to having to eat food she did not like, and hated the early rising. One morning when she was late a Sister took her comb from her hands to help her with her hair. Sarah attacked the Sister in one of

her fits of passion, and was not calmed down until the Mother Superior arrived. She could always calm Sarah; she was more of a mother to her than to any of the other girls.

She was a poor scholar; apart from geography and drawing, she had no interest in lessons. "Arithmetic drove me wild, spelling plagued my life out, and I thoroughly despised the piano." She liked gymnastics and all kinds of physical activity. Once one of the smaller girls, aged about four, fell into a pool in the grounds. She would have drowned if Sarah had not dashed in and pulled her out. The Mother Superior praised her, and Sarah glowed.

Yet she did not entirely lose the feeling of being in prison, and there are stories of her attempts to escape. One of these tells that she persuaded some of the other girls to run away with her, and they pooled their money and packed up some clothes. Then Sarah went to see the Sister at the lodge and said she had a hole in her frock, just under the armpit. She lifted her arm to show where it was, and while the Sister looked, Sarah was able to pull the rope that opened the gate. Before the Sister realized what was happening the other girls ran out, and then Sarah ran after them. They were soon brought back, and Sarah was nearly expelled in disgrace.

She was nearly expelled another time, when a funeral ceremony was held outside the convent wall. A large crowd assembled to hear an oration by the Bishop of Versailles, and the story is that Sarah climbed up on to the convent wall and shouted and sang and waved. On another occasion she was punished for some offence with three days' solitary confinement, and this made her so unhappy that she escaped into the gardens and climbed up a chestnut-tree. The Sisters searched the convent for her, and then sent the watch-dog round the grounds. It tracked her down, and sat under the tree and barked. The Sisters begged Sarah to come down, but she refused. "I will die here, I want to die here," she shouted passionately. They brought the gardener to try to get her down, but his ladder was not high enough. At last Sarah said she would come down only if they took her out of

solitary confinement, and, as they were frightened she would fall and kill herself, the Sisters agreed.

Then there was the occasion when the convent was visited by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. A concert was to be given in his honour, and a religious play. At first Sarah was not given a part, but the girl chosen to play the angel Raphael was so nervous that in the end Sarah played the part instead. She said afterwards that she was thrilled, and that the Archbishop singled her out for especial praise. This may well be true, but in view of her attitude to acting after she left the convent it is of no significance.

Much more important to her, as to all the other girls, was her First Communion. She took this when she was twelve. First, however, she had to be baptized, as her parents had neglected to have this done before. Instead of Sarah she was given the more Christian names of Marie Henriette. Her First Communion made a deep impression on her, and she began to think of becoming a nun. "The Son of God became a cult with me, and the Mother of the Seven Sorrows my ideal." No doubt her religious phase was influenced by the fact that the convent was the happiest home she had ever known.

This phase did not last long. Soon after her First Communion she was seriously ill, and her mother took her to Cauterets, in the Pyrenees, to recover her strength. There she played with cats and dogs and especially goats, and said she wanted to be a goat-herd.

She went back to the convent, and soon afterwards heard that her father had died in Italy. She had only seen him a few times in her life, and could not feel great grief. He had not done much to deserve to be mourned. But he had paid for her education, and before he died he settled enough money on her for a dowry on her marriage. If he had done less than he ought, he had done more than he needed.

When she was fifteen her mother took her out of the convent and into her own home. Another daughter had been born, named Regina. The three girls all had different fathers. Their mother made no secret of the fact that she loved Jeanne

best and Sarah least, and Sarah was very unhappy at home. The fact that it was luxurious did not impress her at all. She wanted to go back to the convent, where she had enjoyed six years of austerity and love.

It was indeed a luxurious home, and Sarah's mother entertained persons of quality and fashion. A regular visitor was the Duc de Morny, a step-brother of Emperor Napoleon III and one of the most important men in France. Big dinner-parties were given, and Sarah was expected to help to charm the guests. Instead she made any excuse she could find to avoid meeting them. She spilt ink on her frock, or pretended she had sprained her ankle, or simply failed to appear at table. This was not because she disliked company; on the contrary, it was solitude she hated most, and she hated it all her life. But she liked to choose her company, and she liked to be the centre of attraction. She disliked her mother's friends and found no pleasure in playing third fiddle to her mother and Jeanne.

She had one friend of her own. This was Madame Guérard, the wife of a historian, who lived in the apartment above. The Guérards had little money, but were natural and kind. Sarah found Madame Guérard's sincerity a welcome change from the artificiality of her mother's circle. She confided in Madame Guérard. "With you, my little lady"—she always called her that—"I can dream out loud." When Sarah was famous Madame Guérard became her secretary and companion, and travelled with her everywhere for thirty years.

At fifteen Sarah was not pretty. She was thin and gawky; her nose was too large and her mouth too wide; and her fair reddish hair was frizzy and unkempt. She did not try to improve her appearance, but seemed to go out of her way to look scruffy. She also refused to learn any social graces, and in her mother's eyes she was an ill-mannered slut. She was also sulky and bad-tempered, turbulent and restless and hostile; in fact, hers was the normal behaviour of a girl who feels she is not loved. Her mother could not understand this,

and seems to have been genuinely unable to realize why Sarah could not behave like sweet, pampered Jeanne.

The Duc de Morny also wished Sarah was less difficult; not because he cared about her, but because she upset her mother. There was always tension between them, and clearly it would be better for both of them if they were apart. The difficulty was that there was nowhere for Sarah to go. She was too old to go back to school, and too young to live alone; and neither of her aunts wanted her. She might get married—in spite of her appearance she already had some proposals at fifteen, which she promptly turned down; her ungraciousness towards her suitors did not suggest she was likely to choose that way out.

If she had to continue to live at home, the Duc de Morny thought, at least she might be found something to occupy her time during the day. What she needed was a career. But careers for women were still a novelty, and Sarah had shown no signs of having any special talent. On the contrary, she was considered of less than average ability and intelligence. There seemed to be nothing much open to her. Then the Duc de Morny thought of sending her to the Conservatoire to be trained as an actress. He made the suggestion because it was the only thing he could think of to keep Sarah out of the house and stop her from getting on her mother's nerves.

Sarah said she did not want to be an actress.

"Why not?" asked the Duc de Morny.

"Because she is too thin," her mother replied for her.

And that sentence probably decided Sarah's fate.

She had no interest in the theatre, and she did not want to act. She was far too stubborn and self-willed to have allowed herself to be persuaded by the Duc de Morny or the Emperor himself. But she was annoyed when her mother spoke for her and very annoyed by her reply. She immediately denied it, and told her mother crossly that success on the stage did not depend on an actress's weight. She went further than that. Perversely she changed her mind, and said she would agree to go to the Conservatoire if there was plenty of hard

work—enough to keep her out of the social round at home. The Duc de Morny assured her there would be plenty of work. Before she had time to change her mind he said he would arrange it.

But she had no intention of changing her mind. Once it was made up she began to prepare herself for her career.

In her memoirs Sarah Bernhardt wrote that after the Duc de Morny made his suggestion she was taken to the theatre for the first time, and was so affected that she burst into loud sobs so that every one else turned to look at her. Perhaps she did; but it was not her first visit to the theatre, and her highly dramatized story does not quite ring true.

There was an annual competitive examination for admission to the Conservatoire. There were anything up to two hundred entrants, and only about fifteen to twenty places. Sarah did nothing by halves, and once she had made up her mind she began to prepare for the examination. She got out her school-books and began to learn all the parts—male and female—in the plays of Corneille and Racine.

Alexandre Dumas, one of her mother's friends, may have given her some private coaching, but it was probably her godfather who directed her studies. The examination consisted of reciting a part in one scene of a play chosen by the entrant, and Sarah's godfather suggested suitable scenes. In the end she decided on one of Molière's plays, *L'École des Femmes*. She was going to do the part of Agnès in a scene with the character Arnolphe. She learnt the part by heart.

She was sixteen when the day of the examination arrived. She went to the Conservatoire, and waited her turn. Five minutes before she was due to be called the usher asked her what part she had chosen. She told him, and he asked her who was going to give her the cues.

"Cues?" she said. "Cues?"

If she was going to do the part of Agnès, the usher said, she would need some one to read Arnolphe's part. All the other entrants had brought their own prompters, with whom

they had rehearsed their scenes. Surely she had done the same?

She had not. It was something that had never occurred to her, or to her godfather; and, as it could hardly have failed to occur to the dramatist Alexandre Dumas, it seems unlikely that he played much part in preparing her for the examination.

Sarah could not get a prompter at five minutes' notice, so she said she would not play that scene at all. Instead she was going to recite one of La Fontaine's fables. The usher wrote it down. Sarah was called and the fable was announced.

"Is this a joke?" asked one of the judges, annoyed. "This is not a kindergarten!"

Another of the judges whispered to him, and Sarah was allowed to recite. She did not recite very well, for she was handicapped by a difficulty in speech—a defect in pronunciation caused by speaking with clenched teeth. In any case this was not acting, and she had no chance of winning admission to the Conservatoire on the merits of this performance.

She was not admitted to the Conservatoire on her merits. It had all been arranged beforehand, and, althought she did not know it, the examination was a mere formality. The Duc de Morny was a friend of the Director of the Conservatoire. The Director of the Conservatoire was proud and flattered to be able to call such a great man his friend. Such a friendship was too valuable to be lost over the matter of one entrant to the Conservatoire. It was the Duc de Morny's name that the judge had whispered before Sarah began to recite. He had recommended her. She had to be passed.

So Sarah went to the Conservatoire, and her teachers put little rubber balls in her mouth to keep it open when she spoke. She was now determined to succeed, and she triumphed over her defect; although she said later that even when she was at the height of her fame, she still suffered from her old trouble if she felt nervous.

A rich tanner wanted to marry her, and her mother and

godfather both urged her to accept. She might not get such a good offer again, and, after all, marriage was a better solution than the Conservatoire. It never occurred to them that the girl might be a good actress. Sarah turned the tanner down, and she would have turned anyone down then, for she had fallen in love with the stage. Her career had been suggested by chance, accepted on a whim, and made possible by unfair influence; no one had less reason or less right to be in the Conservatoire—but now that she was there Sarah had found her vocation.

She was no longer a slut, and now that she combed her hair and took some trouble with her appearance she showed that she was not plain after all. Her eyes, with their far-away look, were quite striking. She was also beginning to show that she could act. At the end of her first year she won second prize for tragedy and an honourable mention for comedy, and she expected a first prize at the end of the second year. But her teacher was changed, and she did not make the progress she had expected. When it came to the examinations she won only second prize for comedy and nothing for tragedy. When the results were announced she went home in despair. "I knew that would happen," her mother told her. "You will never get anywhere in life, my poor child."

At the time, Sarah believed her, and for weeks afterwards she was miserable and desperate. She thought of running away, of going back to the convent, even of killing herself. Then the Duc de Morny took pity on her and used his influence again. He got her an engagement at the *Comédie Française*. Again Sarah was given a chance that she did not deserve.

She made her début two months before her eighteenth birthday. For the first time she saw her name on the posters outside a theatre. It was her own name. She had dropped the Marie Henriette when she gave up the idea of being a nun, and, although baptized a Christian, she never forgot her Jewish ancestry. She never showed any interest in the Jewish religion, but was quick to rebuke anyone who made an anti-

Semitic remark. "I too am a daughter of the Jewish race," she used to say.

Her first part was Iphigénie, in Racine's *Iphigénie en Aulide.* She had the usual stage-fright and was not impressive. The famous critic Francisque Sarcey, who made or broke actors and actresses with his pen, wrote of her performance:

"Mademoiselle Bernhardt, who made her début yesterday in the role of Iphigénie, is a tall, pretty girl with a slender figure and a very pleasing expression. The upper part of her face is really beautiful. Her carriage is good, and her enunciation is perfectly clear. That is all that can be said of her at present."

Sarcey had more to say after he had seen her in two more parts. In the third, he said, she was "just as pretty and insignificant" as in the first two. "The performance was very poor and arouses sad reflection," he wrote; but it was the performance of the experienced members of the cast that upset him. "The fact that Mademoiselle Bernhardt is inadequate is not very important. It is perfectly natural that among these beginners there should be some who do not succeed. Many must be tried before a good one is found."

Like many critics before and after him, Sarcey had to eat his words.

MARIE CURIE

Photo "Picture Post"

HELEN KELLER WITH "TEACHER"

Photo "Picture Post"

11

MARIE CURIE

SHE was born Marya Sklodovska, and they called her Manya at home. She was born in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, on November 7, 1867. There were already four children in the family. Zosia, the eldest, was seven; Jozio, the only boy, was four; then came Bronya, three, and Hela, eighteen months. Both their parents came from land-owning families, which a few generations back had ranked as minor nobles; but they had lost their fortunes in their country's troubles, and both Manya's parents worked for a living.

Her father had studied science at the University of St Petersburg, and returned to Warsaw to teach mathematics and physics. At home he had a glass case full of scientific instruments, and when Manya was still very small she wanted to know what they were. "Physics apparatus," he told her; and as she was feeling gay she sang the words in tune. Then she forgot them for a long time.

Her mother also taught, and when Manya was born she was the principal of a girls' school in Warsaw. She continued to teach even when she had five children of her own to look after, for her husband did not earn much and they wanted to keep a middle-class standard of living. She was very beautiful, and a fine pianist and singer; very cheerful too, although she knew she was slowly dying. She contracted tuberculosis about the time of Manya's birth. As soon as it was diagnosed she put aside a set of plates and cups and dishes for her own use, to reduce the risk of infecting her children; and for the same reason Manya grew up without ever having a mother's kiss.

When Manya was only a few months old her father was appointed professor and under-inspector of a gymnasium, or

high school. It was a residential post, and living quarters were provided for his family. When they moved his wife gave up her own teaching job. To make up for the loss of income she learnt shoe-making, and made all the children's shoes; for even a professor and under-inspector did not earn much in those days if he was a Pole.

Poland was a nation but no longer a state. Three successive partitions had broken it into fragments, the spoils being divided among Germany, Austria, and Russia. Warsaw was in Russian Poland. In name it was a Russian province; in fact it was a Russian colony.

There had been resistance to the conquerors, and some armed revolts. There was an uprising only four years before Manya's birth. It failed like all the others; the leaders were hanged, and others were sent in chains to the vast natural Russian prison of Siberia. Resistance persisted, but in a different form. If freedom could not yet be won by force it must not be lost through forgetfulness; and the younger generation, that had never known it, must be brought up to want it and seek it when the time was ripe. This was the view of most Polish intellectuals, and it fell to the teachers to put it into effect.

It was not easy, and it involved humiliation and an appearance of collaboration. Poland was governed from Moscow. The Polish police force was under Russian control, as were the courts and the civil service; and the Russians, knowing the danger-spots, installed Russians as principals of all the large schools and colleges. However high a Polish teacher rose, he always had to take orders from a Russian.

The head of the high school where Manya's father taught was a Russian named Ivanov. Poorly educated himself, he was ignorant and uncouth; and he disliked Professor Sklodovski because of his intellectual superiority. The Pole could even write better Russian. Ivanov tried to catch him allowing 'deviations' from the strict educational laws. Under these even the Polish language was forbidden in schools. All books were in Russian, and Polish teachers had to teach Polish

children in that language. According to the Russians, Polish was not a language at all, but only a dialect.

Once Ivanov criticized Manya's father because one of his pupils had made mistakes—"Polish-isms," he called them—in his Russian composition.

"Mr Ivanov, if that child made a mistake it was only a slip," Sklodovski told him. He added, "It happens that you too write Russian incorrectly at times—and indeed fairly often. I am convinced that you do not do it deliberately, any more than the child does." Brave words; rash words, for Ivanov neither forgave nor forgot.

Zosia, the eldest of the children, already knew something of the conflict between teachers like her father and their Russian controllers. She was almost grown up to Manya, who played more with Jozio, Bronya, and Hela. They all listened to Zosia's stories—she was a wonderful story-teller, and acted little plays to them that she made up herself. They were all bright children; but it was not long before it became clear that Manya was the brightest of them all. She learnt to read while very young, and showed an extraordinary memory and understanding. She could have been an infant prodigy if her parents had allowed it; but they wanted her to develop naturally, unforced, and even discouraged her from reading too much. When she sought books they commonly diverted her attention to dolls or bricks, or asked her to sing or play in the garden.

Manya was easily diverted, and shared with her sisters and brother a love of the country. Every summer they left Warsaw to stay with relatives, and went paddling in the river and climbing an old lime-tree. When Manya was still too young to climb by herself the others lifted her up so that she could sit with them in a tree-top house made of branches padded with cabbage-leaves. Their parents encouraged them to enjoy their freedom; for only the very young could feel free in Poland under the Russians.

But the happiness of the family was never complete, for the children knew their mother was ill and getting worse.

She and Zosia went to Nice when Manya was nearly five, and stayed there for a year. When they returned the other children were shocked by their mother's appearance. She was still outwardly cheerful, but no longer able to do so much work. Aunt Lucia took a hand in looking after the younger ones, and for a time life went on.

In the summer before Manya's sixth birthday the family went away for their usual holiday in the country. When they came back an official letter was waiting for Professor Sklodovski. It told him that his salary had been reduced, and that he had been deprived of his under-inspectorship at the school. This meant moving out and finding and paying for lodgings. No reason was given, and none was needed. The reason was Ivanov.

They found another home, and after several moves they settled in a house where Professor Sklodovski could take in boarders. He chose them from among his pupils at the high school, and gave them food and lodging and private instruction. At first he had two or three, then five, eight, finally ten. The house was overcrowded, and the three girls had to share a room and sleep on moleskin divans. It was no longer a home of their own. But life went on for all of them, until one of the boarder-pupils contracted typhus fever and gave it to Bronya and Zosia. Both were seriously ill; Bronya recovered, but Zosia died. Manya, then eight, went with the others to the funeral. Their mother, too weak to go out, watched from the window as the coffin was taken away.

Two years later they were poorer than ever before. Professor Sklodovski had always saved hard, to provide for his children's education and his daughters' marriage portion; and, to give his wife the treatment she needed as well, he was virtually running a private boarding-school in his spare time. He had a fair sum saved when a brother-in-law offered to let him have shares in a "marvellous" steam-mill that would double his money in no time. In no time the money was all lost. He never forgave himself for this. But soon the loss was forgotten in the family's greatest sorrow. The doctor was

dismissed, and his place in the sick-room was taken by the priest. Then the professor and his four children were called in, and the dying woman said good-bye to each of them separately. Her last words were for them all: "I love you."

Meanwhile Manya had begun to go to school: to a private school run by a woman named Sikorska. Manya's teacher was Miss Tupalska—Tupsia, they called her—and she looked and was strict and resolute. Manya, the brightest of the pupils, two years younger than the other girls in the class, was already showing a stubborn and independent nature; and Tupsia was not too gentle with her. But while there was often friction between the teacher and the pupils, they closed their ranks in the face of the common enemy.

Their particular common enemy was a man named Hornberg. He was the Inspector of Private Boarding Schools in Warsaw. Like all school inspectors, he inspected the teachers, not the pupils, and Miss Sikorska and Tupsia had more reason to fear him than the girls had. But the danger was shared.

These Polish children, like French and other European children in the Second World War, were brought up with a double standard of morality. On the one hand they were taught that honesty was a virtue; on the other hand they were encouraged to lie and deceive. It was wrong to tell lies to their parents or Tupsia; when Hornberg asked questions it was wrong to tell the truth.

Like Professor Sklodovski, Miss Sikorska and Tupsia considered it their duty to use their positions to keep alive the spirit of freedom. Tupsia taught the girls history—Polish history, in the Polish language; and these history lessons were propaganda against the Russians and for the cause of Polish freedom. During one such lesson a hidden bell sounded in the classroom: two long rings, followed by two short ones. It was the secret alarm.

The moment the bell sounded four of the senior girls rose and collected all the forbidden Polish text-books that were on the desks. They moved swiftly but coolly, for all this had

been carefully rehearsed. Then they went through a small door leading to one of the dormitories, and put the books in a prepared hiding-place. They returned at once to their places, and when the classroom door opened the whole class of twenty-five were bending over their embroidery. Tupsia was sitting at her desk in front, an open book before her. In walked Hornberg, accompanied by Miss Sikorska. It was she who had given the school porter the signal to sound the warning on the secret bell.

Hornberg looked at the teacher's book: it was a book of Russian fairy-tales. He looked at the girls, who all had their heads down over their work. Casually he walked up and opened one of the desks: it was empty. Then he sat down, and asked Tupsia to choose a girl to answer his questions.

Tupsia chose Manya. She always did. Although so much younger than the others, she was the quickest-witted and the most reliable. She could be relied on to deceive.

Hornberg began by telling her to recite the Lord's Prayer. This in itself was a humiliation of a peculiarly subtle kind. "Holy Russia" professed to respect the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, but forced the Poles to profane it daily by insisting that all prayers should be said in Russian instead of Latin.

Manya's Russian was beautiful.

"Name the Tsars who have reigned over our Holy Russia since Catherine II," the inspector told her next.

She rattled them off without hesitation, and without letting her voice betray her feeling for Russia. She was equally good at reciting the names and titles of the members of the Imperial family, and more information of the same kind that Hornberg demanded. Then came the last and most-hated question of all:

"Who rules over us?"

For the first time Manya hesitated, and the inspector had to repeat the question irritably before she forced out the prescribed answer:

"His Majesty Alexander II, Tsar of All the Russias."

Hornberg smiled and went out. The class relaxed. Tupsia rewarded Manya with a kiss on the forehead. And Manya burst into tears.

Manya followed her sisters and brother to the Government gymnasium, where Bronya won a gold medal. She left to take over the duties of running the house, which had been in charge of a succession of incompetent housekeepers. Jozio also won a gold medal at the high school, and then entered the University of Warsaw to study medicine. It was not a good university, but his sisters envied him; for girls were not admitted.

At the gymnasium Manya made a good friend and a bad enemy. The friend was a girl of her own age named Kazia, who shared her own high spirits and hatred of the Russians. The enemy was the superintendent of studies, a German woman named Mayer. Small in body and mind, she found fault with Manya at every opportunity—and then complained when Manya listened to her criticism with a "scornful smile." Once she lost her temper completely. "I forbid you to look at me like that!" she shouted. "You mustn't look down at me!" Manya, who was a head taller than Miss Mayer, replied, "The fact is that I can't do anything else." But she and Kazia were nearly in grave trouble when Miss Mayer surprised them in the classroom dancing round the desks to celebrate the news of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II.

There were Russian and German as well as Polish girls in the class, and they sat together without obvious ill-feeling. But as soon as school was over they separated into their own groups, and the Polish girls especially avoided social contact with the Russians. They no longer needed to be told by Polish teachers that they were not free. They had sharper reminders in their own experience.

One of Manya's earliest came when another Polish girl, named Leonie, came to school one day in obvious distress. Manya and Kazia asked her what the matter was. "It's my brother," Leonie said. "He was in a plot—he was denounced.

We haven't known where he was for three days." She burst out crying. "They're going to hang him to-morrow!"

There were dancing classes that evening, but Manya and Kazia did not go. Instead they went to Leonie's room, together with Bronya and Hela and Kazia's sister; and the six girls sat up together all night, and when dawn came they knelt and prayed while Leonie's brother was hanged.

Manya stayed at the gymnasium until she was in her sixteenth year. Finally she also won a gold medal, and a pile of prizes too. They were all Russian books. "Horrible!" she said in loud disgust as she carried them away. She was leaving the same day, and could afford this gesture of contempt.

Her father then insisted that she should take a year's holiday. She did not need any persuading, and was delighted to go into the country. She had worked hard at the gymnasium, but was delighted to get away from work. "I cannot believe geometry and algebra ever existed," she wrote to Kazia. In return for her board and lodging she had to give a few lessons to a little boy, but apart from this she did nothing. "I read no serious books, only harmless and absurd little novels." In fact, she became thoroughly lazy.

In the country Manya went walking and riding, bathing and fishing for shrimps. She played games, especially battledore and shuttlecock; she went looking for wild strawberries. She had no companions of her own age, but her best friend was a dog. She loved the freedom, and showed no desire to study or work again.

In the winter Manya went to stay with an uncle on the Galacian frontier. There she went to the *kulig*, the great carnival ball, and danced waltzes and mazurkas until eight in the morning.

At last the long holiday came to an end, and Manya returned to Warsaw. Almost at once a former pupil of her mother's invited her and Hela to spend another two months in the country. Of course they went, and enjoyed themselves swimming and rowing and riding and dancing. "We do everything that comes into our heads," Manya wrote to Kazia.

"We sleep sometimes at night and sometimes by day, we dance, and we run to such follies that sometimes we deserve to be locked up in a lunatic asylum."

They returned to Warsaw, and had to think about earning a living. Jozio was a medical student, and therefore still a charge on the family. Their father was nearing retiring age, and would receive only a small pension; and he had to give up the boarder-pupils. They moved into a smaller house, and their life was poorer than before. Yet in one way it was richer, for their father now had more time to share it with them. He was a scholar as well as a teacher, and with his gifted children he held literary evenings.

Manya recovered her desire to study and learn, and this was increased when she met a high-school teacher in her late twenties, named Piasecka, who had formed what she called a "floating university." It had to float, because it was illegal. The students met secretly, and were given lectures on anatomy, natural history, and sociology. Books and pamphlets were passed round, some of foreign origin and others in the forbidden Polish language. All who took part risked imprisonment, for the "floating university" was part of the intellectual resistance movement against the Russians.

Miss Piasecka's students were expected to use and pass on the knowledge they acquired. It was their duty to educate and enlighten the Polish masses—and to pass on the idea of freedom. The idea appealed strongly to Manya, and before she was seventeen she was giving lessons to the employees of a Warsaw dressmaking establishment. She had no time for "harmless and absurd little novels" now.

But this was not bringing in any money, and her own future looked bleak. Jozio would be all right, for he was going to be a doctor. Hela did not seem to have much to worry about, either. She was an excellent singer, and might make singing her career; and she was beautiful, and already had several offers of marriage in spite of her lack of dowry. The only one who seemed worse off than Manya was the eldest of the children, Bronya. For four years after winning her gold medal

she had done nothing but housekeeping. Like Jozio, she wanted to be a doctor. She could not study medicine in Poland. Her only hope was to go to Paris and study there, and return to Poland to practise medicine. But as yet it was a dream rather than a hope.

Their father blamed himself bitterly for having ruined their chances by his rash speculation, but they would not listen to him. They said they would earn the money they needed themselves. They would go out to work: that meant, of course, teaching. There was no other possible job. The trouble was that it was wretchedly paid.

Manya shared Bronya's ambition. She also wanted to go to Paris and study at the famous Sorbonne University. So they both gave private lessons, and they both saved. Eventually Bronya had enough to pay her fare and keep her in Paris for one year. But the medical course lasted five years, and at the present rate of saving she would be middle-aged before she could go.

Then Manya had her brilliant idea. "We'll make an alliance," she said. Bronya would go to Paris—almost at once. She would live on her own savings at first, and when these were used up she would live on what Manya had saved. Their father would send some money, too. Manya would be earning all the time, saving for herself as well as for Bronya; and when Bronya had qualified as a doctor she would help Manya in the same way. Bronya said that Manya could not possibly earn enough by giving private lessons. Manya replied that she did not mean to go on giving private lessons. She was going to take a full-time job—as a governess.

At first shocked at the thought, Bronya then suggested that she should be the governess so that Manya could go first. "You are more gifted than I am—you would succeed very quickly." Manya refused to consider the idea. "You are twenty and I'm seventeen. You've been waiting for hundreds of years, and I've got lots of time. When you have your own practice," she added, "you can bury me in gold—in fact, I count on it."

Bronya went to Paris. Manya went to an employment agency, and found a job as governess with the family of a Warsaw lawyer. It was in "one of those rich houses where they speak French when there is company—a chimney-sweeper's kind of French—where they don't pay their bills for six months, and where they fling money out of the window even though they economize pettily on oil for the lamps," she wrote to her cousin Henrietta. "I shouldn't like my worst enemy to live in such a hell." She did not stay there long. "In the end my relations with Madame B—— had become so icy that I could not endure it any longer, and told her so. Since she was exactly as enthusiastic about me as I was about her, we understood each other marvellously well."

Manya now decided to take a similar job in the country. She did not like going away from her father and her home, but the pay would be better and life cheaper; and she told herself she loved the country, which was true. The parting was still not easy, and she was depressed when she found that the view from her bedroom window was a large, smoky factory chimney; for the farm she went to was in the sugar-beet area, and there was not much beauty of landscape. Still, she found her new employers agreeable, and she soon became friendly with the eldest girl, Bronka, who was her own age. She worked for seven hours a day—three with Bronka and four with her ten-year-old sister, Andzia. "This is rather a lot," she told her cousin Henrietta, "but it doesn't matter."

What mattered more was the lack of intellectual companionship, and she missed the "floating university." But she remembered Miss Piasecka's ideals, and soon put them into practice. Most of the village children could not read or write, and those that could knew only the Russian alphabet. Manya wanted to hold classes in Polish. She suggested it to Bronka, who was enthusiastic. Bronka's father gave them permission, although he knew that if his daughter was caught she might be sent to Siberia. Soon they had a class of eighteen, and taught them two hours a day and longer on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Manya spent part of her savings on pens and copybooks.

Manya had been there less than a year when the eldest son of the family, Casimir, returned home after studying at Warsaw University. He was enchanted by the new governess. She was not only pretty but intelligent and witty, and quite different from all the other girls he had met. She was a country-lover too, and could ride and row and skate; and she was a wonderful dancer. It did not take Casimir long to discover all this or to fall in love with her. She fell in love with him. She was not yet nineteen, and he was only a little older. They talked of marriage. He asked his parents for their consent.

Both Casimir and Manya expected they would agree. She was treated almost like one of the family; her father and brother and sisters had stayed at the farm and been treated like guests, no objection had been raised to Casimir taking her out, and it must have been obvious how their friendship was developing. It was true that she had no dowry, but the family was well off. There was no ground for objection.

Casimir's parents objected very strongly, Manya might have all the virtues—her father might be a respected professor, and she herself far better educated than their own daughter—but she was only a governess. It was unthinkable that their son could lower himself to marry her. Casimir's father said so angrily. Casimir's mother was even more definite; for she had been a governess herself before her marriage.

Casimir was not strong-willed and obstinate like Manya. He was too obedient to have any strength of character, and gave in.

Manya wanted to leave then, to get away from Casimir and the whole family; but she still had her duty to Bronya, whose own savings had now been exhausted. The post was exceptionally well paid, and it might not be easy to find another as good. Manya stayed, and took refuge in work: not only as a teacher, but as a student too.

She studied literature, mathematics, and science. She found some text-books—old and out of date—in the factory library,

and corresponded about mathematics with her father. Already his subjects—mathematics and physics—were her own favourites. She could not begin her studies until nine in the evening, and then she often had to break off to play draughts or make a fourth at cards; and sometimes she got up at six to study before her working day began. She forced herself to do it. "I read several things at a time," she wrote to Henrietta. "The consecutive study of a single subject would wear out my poor little head, which is already much overworked. When I feel myself quite unable to read with profit, I work out problems of algebra or trigonometry, which allow no lapses of attention and get me back into the right road."

She worked in order to forget rather than with any hope of making use of her knowledge later. "My plans for the future? I have none, or rather they are so commonplace or simple that they are not worth talking about. I mean to get through as well as I can, and when I can do no more, say farewell to this base world. The loss will be small, and regret for me will be short—as short as for so many others," she added with unusual self-pity. "These are my only plans now. Some people pretend that in spite of everything I am obliged to pass through the kind of fever called love. This absolutely does not enter into my plans. If I ever had any others, they have gone up in smoke; I have buried them; locked them up; sealed and forgotten them—for you know that walls are always stronger than the heads which try to break them down."

This was not a passing phase. Manya was convinced that she would never go to the Sorbonne now, and she hoped only for the success of her brother and sister. "Now that I have lost the hope of ever becoming anybody," she wrote to Jozio, "all my ambition has been transferred to Bronya and you.... The more regret I have for myself, the more hope I have for you." She hoped for Hela too, and was bitterly angry when she heard that her sister's engagement had been broken, apparently because of her lack of dowry. "Truly it gives me

a good opinion of men!" she wrote sarcastically. "If they don't want to marry poor young girls, let them go to the devil! Nobody is asking them for anything. But why do they offend by troubling the peace of an innocent creature?"

Casimir was still troubling Manya herself. A year after his parents had refused to agree to the match she had to tell Henrietta there was no truth in the rumour that they were going to marry after all. "My plans for the future are modest indeed," she added. "My dream, for the moment, is to have a corner of my own where I can live with my father. . . . To get my independence again, and a place to live, I would give half my life." That was not possible yet, but she hoped that she would eventually be able to take a post as a teacher in a girls' school in Warsaw and give private lessons in her spare time. "It is all I want. Life does not deserve to be worried over." And to her brother: "My darling Jozio, if you only knew how I sigh and long to go to Warsaw for only a few days . . . my soul is worn out . . . I am in torment. . . . If only I didn't have to think of Bronya I should present my resignation this very instant and look for another post, even though this one is so well paid."

She continued teaching the village children and studying hopelessly in the evenings. "Think of it; I am learning chemistry from a book," she wrote to Jozio. "You can imagine how little I get out of that, but what can I do as I have no place to make experiments or do practical work?" To Henrietta she confided her continued mood of "black melancholy" and her longing to leave the farm. "I was barely eighteen when I came here, and what have I not been through! There have been moments which I shall certainly count among the most cruel of my life. . . . I count the hours and days that separate me from the holidays and my departure to my own people."

Meanwhile her father had reached retiring age and was receiving his pension. At the same time he took another job, as principal of a reform school. It was unpleasant work, but well paid; and he was able to make quite a large allowance

for Bronya. She said it was too large. She wrote to Manya telling her to stop sending money, and to her father telling him to reduce the allowance and put the balance aside for Manya. Bronya's own news was good. She was passing her examinations—and she had fallen in love. The man was a fellow student, also a Pole; another Casimir.

Manya left the sugar-beet farm soon afterwards. She had been there over three years, and her engagement had come to an end. She returned to Warsaw and took a new post in the town, this time with a family of industrialists. They treated her well, and she was near her father. She had been with them for eight months when she received a dramatic letter from Bronya.

It was scribbled on squared paper, and had been written between two sessions in the operating theatre. The gist of it was that Bronya wanted Manya to join her in Paris in the following year.

Bronya worked it all out. Her Casimir, she said, was about to qualify as a doctor, and she herself had only her final examinations to take. At the end of the term they would get married, and then stay another year in Paris while she finished her course. Manya would live with them, and would need to pay only her fees at the Sorbonne. At the end of the year Bronya and Casimir would return to Poland, and send Manya money for her keep as well as her fees.

It was so simple and straightforward to Bronya, but Manya found difficulties. "I dreamed of Paris as of redemption," she wrote back, "but the hope of going there left me a long time ago. And now that the possibility is offered me, I do not know what to do.... I am afraid to speak of it to Father: I believe our plan of living together next year is close to his heart, and he clings to it; I want to give him a little happiness in his old age.... There is also the fact that I promised Hela to take her back home in a year, and to find her a post in Warsaw.... I feel it is my duty to watch over her—the poor little thing needs it so." And then there was Jozio, who needed money to enable him to come back to

Warsaw to practise and study—"his future depends on it." Finally, "I bore you with Hela, Jozio, and Father, and with my own wrecked future. My heart is so black, so sad . . . to-day I am exceptionally unhappy in this world."

Bronya wrote back insisting that Manya should think of herself for once, and after more argument Manya at last agreed to a compromise. She would finish her present engagement, and then live for a year with her father, who had now given up his post at the reform school. She would spend this time teaching and adding to her savings. Then, if all was well, she would go to Paris.

Manya carried out this plan, and it was the happiest year she had spent for a long time. She rejoined the "floating university"—and she entered a laboratory for the first time in her life. It was in what was called the "Museum of Industry and Agriculture," run by her cousin Joseph. The title was a 'blind' to hoodwink the Russians. There Manya had her first introduction to experimental science. "I tried to reproduce various experiments described in the treatises on physics or chemistry, and the results were sometimes unexpected." She could only go on Sundays or in the evenings after dinner, but "I developed my taste for experimental research during these first trials."

She also had her last meeting with Casimir, who still wanted to marry her but lacked the courage to defy his parents. Finally she lost her patience. "If you can't see a way to clear up our situation, it is not for me to teach it to you," she said. Then she left him for good.

And she went to Paris. She travelled fourth class, in a carriage that was little more than a goods wagon, after a tearful parting from her father. She was nearly twenty-four.

Two years later she passed first in the master's examination in physics, and a year after that she was second in the master's examination in mathematics. Then she fell in love with a scientist of genius named Pierre Curie.

She was nearly twenty-eight when they married. Three years later they discovered radium.

12

HELEN KELLER

To feel sorry for Helen Keller would be not only a mistake but an impertinence. If most of us who can see and hear were half as cheerful and useful as she is, the world would be a happier place. Mark Twain once said that she and Napoleon were the two most interesting characters of the nineteenth century, and she was only a girl when it ended. Since then she has become, and remained, the most widely respected woman in the world. She won fame first for her triumph over her disabilities; but that was a purely personal triumph, and only the gateway to a career of service to others. Devoutly religious, she has always believed that she has a mission in life, given to her by God, to help others who are disabled and especially the blind. No one could have helped them more.

Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, a small town in Northern Alabama. Her father, a former captain in the Confederate Army, was a gentleman-farmer and edited a local paper. Helen was a normal infant, but quicker than most to learn. When she was six months she would call out "How d'ye!" and once she called attention by saying "Tea, tea, tea." She first walked when she was a year old. She was active, vigorous, and self-assertive when, at nineteen months, she became so ill that the doctors thought she would die. Instead she recovered, and the rest of her childhood was extremely healthy; but the illness had deprived her for ever of both hearing and sight.

Because she was deaf, and too young to have learnt to talk properly, Helen was also dumb. There was nothing wrong with her vocal organs, but speech is acquired by imitation. Her only method of communication with others was by

touch. She expressed her wants by signs. In compensation for the loss of two senses her sense of touch developed, and at the age of five she was able to pick out her clothes from the family laundry parcel and fold and put them away. She could tell when her mother and aunt were going out by the dresses they were wearing. When guests left the house she waved her arm—"I think with a vague remembrance of the meaning of the gesture."

At first she did not know she was different from other people, but she soon began to understand. She discovered that her mother and friends did not communicate by signs. She sometimes stood between two persons who were talking and touched their lips, and so learned that communication was made by mouth. Then she moved her own lips, but found them useless to her. "This made me so angry at times that I kicked and screamed until I was exhausted."

As she grew older her kicking and screaming fits grew worse instead of better, and her parents made no attempt to control her. They felt so much love and compassion for her that they could not bear to do anything that might make her unhappy; and, being naturally strong-willed, she became a little tyrant and had the whole household under her thumb. She was unusually intelligent and cunning, and in spite of her handicaps she found means of making her wishes known. They were always granted, but her feeling of frustration increased rather than diminished as she became more and more aware of her inability to do all the things that were so easy for every one else. Her temper was violent, and the slightest annoyance sent her into a crying fit; and all her mother's efforts to calm and soothe her failed.

There was no one in Tuscumbia to help her parents. The doctors were sure she would never see or hear again; there were no schools for the blind or deaf in Alabama, and it was generally thought that a child who was both blind and deaf could not be taught at all. Helen's mother had read Charles Dickens's *American Notes*, and vaguely remembered the account of the education of a girl named Laura Bridg-

man, who was also deaf and blind, by Dr Samuel Gridley Howe—the man who had advised Florence Nightingale to "go forward" when she asked him if she should take up nursing. But Dr Howe had died four years before Helen was born, and presumably his methods of teaching the deaf-blind had died with him.

Hope of a different kind came when Helen was six. Her father heard of an eminent oculist in Baltimore who had cured many cases that had been given up as hopeless. He took Helen to see him. The oculist was sympathetic, but said her sight could never be restored. However, he suggested that she might be educated, and recommended her father to see Dr Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone and a pioneer in the education of deaf-mutes. He was in Washington, and Helen was taken there. Dr Bell told Helen's father that Dr Howe's work was being carried on in the Perkins Institution for the Blind, in Boston, where Laura Bridgman had been educated. The director of the institution was Dr Howe's son-in-law, Michael Anagnos, and on Dr Bell's advice Helen's father wrote to him to ask if he could provide a competent teacher. Anagnos replied that he could; and in March 1887, three months before Helen's seventh birthday, the teacher arrived at Tuscumbia. Her name was Anne Mansfield Sullivan.

Teacher, as she was to be called, was not quite twenty-one. Her qualifications were slight, and to say she was competent to educate Helen was, at the best, a shrewd guess. She was the daughter of illiterate Irish immigrants. Her father was a drunkard, and educated her with a whip. At fourteen she was still illiterate herself. She was also almost totally blind, and that was why she entered the Perkins Institution. There her sight was partially restored, and she was educated and then trained to teach the blind. She also learnt the manual deaf-and-dumb alphabet, and lived in the same house as Laura Bridgman during her six years at the institution; but she had no experience of teaching anyone who was both blind and deaf.

Nor had she any sense of vocation. "I came here simply because circumstances made it necessary for me to earn my living," she said later, "and I seized upon the first opportunity that offered itself, although I did not suspect that I had any special fitness for the work." Luck, or Providence, sent her to Tuscumbia; but the sense of vocation appeared soon after, and kept her with Helen until she died, fifty years later.

When Teacher arrived at the house Helen rushed at her and nearly knocked her down the steps, snatched her bag from her hand and tried to open it, and flew into a temper when her mother tried to restrain her. The next morning Teacher's luggage arrived. In it was a doll sent by the blind children of the Perkins Institution and dressed by Laura Bridgman. Teacher gave the doll to Helen, and took the opportunity to try to teach her a word. She took her hand and slowly spelled the letters d-o-l-l in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. Interested, Helen imitated the fingering. Teacher picked up the doll—and Helen thought she was taking it away, and flew into a temper and started fighting for it. "I forced her into a chair and held her there until I was nearly exhausted," Teacher related in a letter. Then she gave up the struggle, got some cake, spelled c-a-k-e into Helen's hand, and gave her the cake—"which she ate in a great hurry, thinking, I suppose, that I might take it from her." She gave her the doll back, and Helen ran downstairs with it and refused to return to Teacher's room for the rest of the day. Helen had given Teacher her first lesson—that her pupil was wild and would have to be tamed before she could be taught.

"The greatest problem I shall have to solve is how to discipline and control her without breaking her spirit," Teacher wrote. "I shall go rather slowly at first and try to win her love." That was not easy, for Helen would not allow anyone to caress her except her mother; and in the next few days Teacher as well as her pupil was reduced to tears. There seemed no way of winning Helen's love. "I soon found that I was cut off from all the usual approaches to her

heart." Teacher could find no solution to the problem but force, much as she hated using it.

According to the views of most child-psychologists to-day, she doubtless used too much force; but at that time child-psychology was itself in its infancy, and the idea of allowing children self-expression was still something of a novelty. Many parents deliberately broke their children's spirit in order to make them obedient. Some still do to-day. The fact that Teacher tried so hard to avoid this, and her belief in the greater power of love, show that her attitude was advanced for her time.

But she was very determined, and from the start she stood up to her employers. "I have done my best to make them see the terrible injustice to Helen of allowing her to have her way in everything," she wrote in a letter. She succeeded, too. "They have promised to let me have a free hand and help me as much as possible." They even agreed to let her take Helen to a cottage about a quarter of a mile from the house, where Teacher could bring her up alone and, as she put it, "stand between her and the over-indulgence of her parents."

There was more kicking and screaming, but there were also periods of peace and quiet; and Teacher used these to teach Helen more words. She spelt out simple nouns on the little girl's fingers, like 'pin' and 'hat,' relating them to the objects. Helen liked playing this game, but she did not at first understand its purpose. She realized that there was some association between the different finger-movements and the objects, but did not know what it was. She could not differentiate between 'mug' and 'milk,' because she did not realize that they were separate names.

Understanding came only a month after Teacher's arrival. One morning, when Helen was washing, Teacher spelt the word 'water' into her hand. "Then it occurred to me that with the help of this new word I might succeed in straightening out the 'mug-milk' difficulty. We went out to the pump-house, and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug,

I spelled 'w-a-t-e-r' in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face." Helen had made the great discovery that, as she put it later, "everything has a name."

She had, in fact, discovered language, and so entered the world of communication; and at the same time her whole personality changed. Her frustration vanished, and discipline was no longer a problem; and for the first time she kissed Teacher of her own accord. She now directed all her energies to learning new words. She went from object to object, and Teacher spelt out the name of each in turn. Within less than three weeks she had a vocabulary of a hundred words. Most were nouns, of course, but she could also understand simple verbs and adjectives. Abstract ideas would obviously be more difficult for her, and the greatest problem would be to teach her to construct the sentences we use in everyday conversation.

Dr Howe had struggled with this problem, but he had not solved it. He taught each word separately by definition, and had only a limited success. Anne Sullivan invented a method of her own. She asked herself, "How does a normal child learn language?" The answer, she decided, was by imitation. A normal child was surrounded by adults who spoke in a language he did not understand. The same words, phrases, and sentences were repeated so many times that they stuck in his memory. He learnt the names of things by asking what they were called, but he learnt language by imitation. Teacher decided that Helen would learn in the same way. She would learn not by rules and definitions but by practice and habit. "I shall talk into her hand as we talk into the baby's ears. I shall assume that she has the normal child's capacity of assimilation and imitation. I shall use complete sentences in talking to her, and fill out the meaning with gestures and her descriptive signs when necessity requires it."

The idea was revolutionary. It had never been tried with

a deaf child, let alone a child that was both deaf and blind. Previously the deaf had always been taught to build sentences according to grammatical rules, because it had been taken for granted that they could not learn in any other way. They were given formal lessons, and did not go on to a new lesson until they had shown they understood the one they had just done. Teacher would have nothing to do with this system, which seemed to her "to be built on the supposition that every child is a kind of idiot who must be taught to think." She refused to teach Helen grammar or sentence construction or the definitions of new words. "Never mind whether she understands each separate word of a sentence or not," she said. "She will guess the meanings of the new words from their connexion with others which are already intelligible to her."

When Helen wanted her mug she spelt the single word 'mug' into Teacher's hand. Teacher gave it to her; and then, when she wanted it back, spelt "Give me your mug" into Helen's hand. She kept on doing this until Helen copied her and also used the whole sentence when she wanted the mug. "Walk," said Helen, meaning she wanted to go for a walk. "Let us go for a walk," said Teacher, meaning the same. "Let us go for a walk," repeated Helen, who had never heard of a tense or mood. And so it went on. Helen learnt, as Teacher had said, "without the slightest suspicion that she is performing a most difficult feat. She learns because she can't help it, just as the bird learns to fly." She learnt just as the baby that can see and hear learns to talk.

There was one other important feature of Teacher's method, and this was that the pupil, not the teacher, should choose what was to be learnt. "I see no sense in 'faking' conversation for the sake of teaching language. It's stupid and deadening to pupil and teacher. I have tried from the beginning to talk naturally to Helen and to teach her to tell me only the things that interest her." Teacher believed that all children were naturally curious and interested in the world about them, and that if their curiosity was encouraged and

exploited there was no difficulty in getting them to learn; on the contrary, they would want to learn, although probably not what were considered the right lessons. Teacher was not interested in the right lessons. "We shall never properly develop the higher natures of our little ones while we continue to fill their minds with the so-called rudiments," she said. "Children will educate themselves under right conditions. They require guidance and sympathy far more than instruction." This was a revolutionary outlook in the nineteenth century. It is still rather 'advanced' to-day.

So there was no classroom for Helen, who learnt to 'talk' during long walks with Teacher on the banks of the Tennessee. She learnt with amazing speed, and Teacher did not flatter herself that this was due only to her original methods. "I know that she has remarkable powers," she wrote in a private letter after three months with Helen. "She is no ordinary child."

Meanwhile Helen had already begun to 'read.' At first she used pieces of cardboard with words printed in raised letters, which she arranged in a frame to form sentences. Then Teacher gave her printed books of a similar kind, and finally taught her braille. These new 'toys' fascinated Helen, and she began writing letters before her seventh birthday. Then she learnt to count and do simple sums.

She also became famous.

Teacher sent regular reports on Helen's progress to the Perkins Institution. She did not make any extravagant claims, and, indeed, tried to save her from publicity: "My beautiful Helen shall not be transformed into a prodigy if I can help it." But Michael Anagnos, the director of the institution, had a different outlook. He credited Teacher with a sense of vocation she had never had, and boasted that he had discovered her genius before she went to Helen. So publicity came in spite of Teacher's efforts, and when she took Helen to Memphis it was "drives, luncheons, receptions" all the time. Eminent teachers and scientists wanted to meet her, and afterwards reported the little girl's prowess to the world at

large. Dr Bell said that her progress was without parallel in the education of the deaf even without allowing for the fact that she was blind as well.

Shortly before her eighth birthday Helen went with Teacher to Boston, and visited the Perkins Institution and then a school for the deaf and dumb. The teachers there were amazed at her command of language. None of the children there could 'talk' as she could, although they were not blind and had been under instruction for two or three years. But it was a different kind of instruction, as Teacher was quick to see. "In one room some little tots were standing before the blackboard, painfully constructing 'simple sentences.'" Teacher asked the woman in charge of the class why she wrote sentences on the board instead of talking about things that interested the children. "The teacher said something about getting the correct instruction"—and Anne Sullivan was full of pity for the children. "Nothing," she wrote afterwards, "crushes the child's impulse to talk naturally more effectually than these blackboard exercises. Language should not be associated with endless hours in school, with puzzling questions in grammar, or with anything that is an enemy to joy."

Of course Teacher was right; but her criticisms were not altogether fair. She had only one girl to teach, and could spend all day talking to Helen and could let her read. All credit to Teacher for going against normal teaching practice and giving her pupil a free hand—but she could hardly have done the same with a whole class of children, even if they were all as bright as Helen; and that would have been very unlikely. Helen was indeed no ordinary child, and Anne Sullivan was no ordinary teacher; but it cannot be disputed that if Helen had not been born into a family that could afford a private teacher her story would probably have been very different.

Helen had already visited a circus, and fed the elephants and ridden on them, stroked the baby lions and shaken hands with the bear, played with the monkeys, and been lifted up

by one of the keepers to feel how tall the giraffes were. Now she went to the seaside, to Brewster, on Cape Cod, and bathed in the sea. Back at home, she began riding a pony, with Teacher holding the leading rein. Later she went tobogganing, and, as she grew older, she took up other sports, including rowing and canoeing and sailing. She saw the world through Teacher's eyes—for Teacher's aim was to give her the means to live and enjoy life in the same way as those who could see and hear, even if it often meant enjoyment at second hand. She has been criticized for this, and it is often said that she went too far in trying to give Helen a veneer of normality instead of training her to accept her limitations and live within them.

Yet Teacher was at first opposed to the idea of teaching Helen to speak. Her vocal organs were perfectly normal, and she cried and laughed and made other ordinary human sounds; but when she fell ill, at nineteen months, she had learnt little more than the usual infant babbling, and now she could not remember the sounds of any of the words she had learnt. Of course she knew that other people talked not with their hands but with their mouths, and she continually tried to do the same. She asked Teacher how children who were just blind learned to speak, and Teacher told her they could learn by imitating what they heard. Then she asked whether children who were only deaf could learn to speak; and Teacher said that some could, but they were greatly helped by being able to see their teachers' mouths. Helen interrupted by saying that she could *feel* her Teacher's mouth and asked if she could learn by that means. Teacher discouraged her. She knew that Laura Bridgman had learnt to pronounce a few simple words, and did not doubt that Helen would be able to do as much; but she did not think anyone who was both deaf and blind would ever be able to learn to talk properly, and she tried to kill Helen's desire.

Then one day, when Helen was nine, one of Laura Bridgman's teachers came on a visit. She had just returned from Norway, and told of how a deaf and blind girl there had been

taught to speak. She said the girl had learnt in the way that Helen had thought of—by feeling the movements of her teacher's lips.

When Helen heard this she was absolutely determined to speak. She began trying to learn by herself, and Teacher realized it was useless to repress her any longer. Not knowing how to set about teaching Helen, she sought the advice of Sarah Fuller, the principal of the Horace Mann School for the Deaf. Miss Fuller agreed to teach Helen herself.

Her method was simple. She simply took Helen's hand and made her feel the position of her tongue and lips each time she made a different sound, and then told Helen to try to imitate her. After only an hour Helen could make the sounds M, P, A, S, T, I. After a little further instruction she mastered all the sounds of the alphabet, and at last she uttered her first sentence: "It is warm." Altogether Sarah Fuller gave her eleven lessons. "I am not dumb now," Helen said with delight; but she was still a long way from being able to talk intelligibly. It was a matter of practice now—practice with her own Teacher.

Anne Sullivan encouraged her now, and spent hours and hours training Helen to speak. The ambition of both was that she should eventually learn to talk like other people; but this ambition was never quite achieved. For those who were used to her voice it was easy to follow, but strangers usually failed to understand all she said. She never quite mastered some sounds, and always spoke with what sounded like some kind of foreign accent. Still, at sixteen she gave her first public address—to the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf.

From the beginning of her education Helen had been a tremendous reader. She read her first book when she was seven, and went on reading all the books she could get hold of. She also became a very keen letter-writer. As so much of her experience of life was second-hand—received either from books or from what Teacher had told her—there was a degree of artificiality in her literary style which appeared

even in her early letters and is noticeable in all her later published works. "Mildred's eyes are very big and blue," she wrote when she was only eight; and later she wrote quite lyrical descriptions of spring blossoms and autumn leaves, rugged mountains and crimson sunsets. She also had a habit of using expressions and phrases that she had absorbed from her reading, although when questioned she rarely remembered their source and often had no recollection of having read them at all. This was a natural result of the fact that so much of her contact with the world was indirect. But it had an unfortunate result when she was eleven, and wrote a little story of her own; at least, she thought it was her own.

She called it "The Frost King," and sent it to Michael Anagnos at the Perkins Institution as a birthday present. He was delighted at this fresh proof of Teacher's achievement—for which he was inclined to take more of the credit than he deserved—and he published the story. Very quickly a reader was struck by its resemblance to a story called "Frost Fairies," by Margaret Candby, which had been published in a book nearly twenty years before. The two stories were compared, and it was obvious that the resemblance was too strong to be accidental. The only possible conclusion was that Helen had read Margaret Candby's story before she wrote her own.

She said she had not. She did not remember even having heard of it. Teacher also denied all knowledge of it—and, as she had hardly ever left Helen, it seemed unlikely that Helen could have read it without her knowing. Helen's parents had never heard of the book, and it had never been published in braille.

But the circumstances were so strange that Michael Anagnos suspected a deliberate fraud, and sent for Helen and had her examined by a committee of teachers and officials of the Perkins Institution. Teacher, who was under suspicion of having helped in the supposed fraud, was not allowed to be present while Helen was examined, and the eleven-year-old girl was put through an unnecessarily cruel

ordeal. The committee consisted of eight persons—four of them blind—and they interrogated her without pause for two hours. "I was questioned and cross-questioned with what seemed to me a determination on the part of my judges to force me to acknowledge that I remembered having had 'The Frost Fairies' read to me," she wrote later. "I felt in every question the doubt and suspicion that was in their minds." But she insisted on her innocence, and in the end—according to Anagnos, only because of his casting vote—she was acquitted.

Meanwhile Teacher, determined to clear the names of Helen and herself, had begun a private investigation with the help of Dr Alexander Graham Bell. At last she learnt that Mrs Sophia Hopkins, with whom she and Helen had stayed at Brewster three years earlier, had had a copy of Margaret Candby's book. During their visit Teacher had been away for a short period, and Mrs Hopkins had then read some stories to Helen. To anyone who knew Helen, and who had read the unconsciously imitative style of her letters, it was obvious what had happened. The idea of the story, and much of the expression, had stuck in her remarkably retentive memory long after the story itself was forgotten. When she reproduced the idea and expression in her own story she sincerely thought they were original.

This explanation satisfied Teacher, and it satisfied Margaret Candby too. "Under the circumstances, I do not see how any one can be so unkind as to call it a plagiarism," she wrote. "It is a wonderful feat of memory, and Helen is indeed a 'wonder-child.' Please give her my warm love, and tell her not to feel troubled about it any more. No one shall be allowed to think it was anything wrong."

But Helen was very troubled about it indeed, and for some time she would not write at all. "The thought that what I wrote might not be absolutely my own tormented me. No one knew of these fears except my teacher." Moreover, she eventually lost the friendship of Michael Anagnos. After apparently believing in her innocence for two years, he let

her know that he had changed his opinion. Some years after that, when Helen had published *The Story of My Life*, he changed his mind again and publicly implied that he had not doubted her innocence. But by then Helen had given such proofs of both her talent and her utter honesty that doubt was impossible. Even Teacher could joke about it, and when Helen came out with a fine phrase she would say wryly, "I wonder where she got that!" For, although she tried hard, Helen was never able to avoid the unconscious borrowing that makes her style artificial.

Meanwhile she had been continuing her education, at home and in the world outside. When she was twelve she went to Washington for the inauguration of President Cleveland, and then visited the Niagara Falls. She stood where she could feel the air vibrate and the earth tremble, and Teacher completed the picture for her. "I wish I could describe the cataract as it is, its beauty and awful grandeur, and the fearful and irresistible plunge of its waters over the brow of the precipice," Helen wrote in a letter. "One feels helpless and overwhelmed in the presence of such a vast force. I had the same feeling once before when I first stood by the great ocean and felt its waves beating against the shore. I suppose you feel so, too, when you gaze up to the stars in the stillness of the night, do you not?"

Then they went with Dr Graham Bell to the World's Fair, and Helen was given special permission to touch the exhibits.

She was reading French plays at thirteen, and had read histories of Greece and Rome as well as America and Europe. She could recite poetry, and was learning Latin grammar. She was also studying mathematics, which she found "as troublesome as it was uninteresting." Literature was her first love, and soon she learned "to know an author, to recognize his style as I recognize the clasp of a friend's hand."

At fourteen she went with Teacher to the Wright-Humason School for the Deaf in New York, which specialized in lip-reading and voice-culture. Her speech was slowly improving,

and she took some singing lessons too. She also learnt German as well as French; and in New York she went for daily walks in Central Park and "saw" the Statue of Liberty. The verb was her own. "The glorious bay lay calm and beautiful in the October sunshine," she wrote in a letter, "and the ships came and went like idle dreams; those seaward going slowly disappeared like clouds that change from gold to grey; those homeward coming sped more quickly like birds that seek their mother's nest." This was the way of writing that had become and always remained her 'natural' style.

At sixteen Helen entered the Cambridge School for Young Ladies, to prepare for admission to Radcliffe College. Teacher attended the classes with her, for this was an ordinary school and none of the staff teachers had any experience in teaching girls who were blind or deaf. Helen now studied English history and literature, German, Latin, and arithmetic. She did all her homework compositions and translations on a typewriter. She read Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Burke's *Speeches*, and for the first time in her life she worked and played with other, normal girls. She joined in their games —naturally she excelled at blind man's buff—and some of them learnt to talk to her in deaf-and-dumb language.

The following year Helen took her preliminary examinations for Radcliffe. She had a room to herself, and answered the questions on a typewriter. When she had finished one of the teachers read over what she had typed, to allow her to revise her work before handing it in. She passed in every subject and gained honours in English and German.

In her second year at Cambridge Helen studied mathematics, physics, astronomy, and Greek and Latin. Here she had new difficulties, for many of the text-books had not been translated into braille, and Anne Sullivan had to read them to her. And algebra and geometry problems could not be worked out on an ordinary typewriter, and a special braille writer had to be obtained and mastered. To visualize the geometrical figures drawn on the blackboard for the other

girls, Helen constructed them on a cushion, using straight and curved wires which had bent and pointed ends. Geometry and algebra continued to be her most difficult subjects—especially as she had no special ability for mathematics. The teachers wanted to cut down her lessons, to prevent her from overworking, and delay her entry to Radcliffe by a year or more; but she protested, and eventually left the classroom to study under a tutor. This was more satisfactory, and she made good progress even in mathematics.

At last, a few days after her nineteenth birthday, Helen took her final examinations for Radcliffe. This was the hardest test she had ever had, and it was made more difficult by the fact that her typed answers were not read back to her, so that she had no opportunity for revision. She also had trouble over the algebra paper, which was set in American braille, for she had learnt all the signs and symbols in English braille. But in the end she passed the examinations, and won the right to be the first deaf and blind girl in the world to enter college.

In 1904 she graduated with honours, and became the first well-educated deaf and blind girl in the world. Her fame and prestige were tremendous; and she used them both for others, with smaller ability and fewer opportunities, who were also blind or deaf. For the next fifty years she worked for them, encouraging and inspiring them, writing and lecturing, making society aware of their problems and needs. Teacher went everywhere with her until her death in 1936. Helen made six journeys round the world, until, in 1955, she retired to her Connecticut home to devote the rest of her life to writing. She remains the most remarkable woman of our age.